


VISUAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT


U.S. 101/Prado Road Interchange Connection Project (for Moderate Level VIA)


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California Department of Transportation

District 5, San Luis Obispo County
Dalidio Drive to Prado Road
File EA-1H640K

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Statement of Compliance: Produced in compliance with National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) requirements, as appropriate, to meet the level of analysis and documentation that has been determined necessary for this project.

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VISUAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT

U.S. 101/Prado Road Interchange Connection Project

I. PURPOSE OF STUDY

The purpose of this visual impact assessment (VIA) is to document potential visual impacts caused by the proposed project and propose measures to lessen any detrimental impacts that are identified. Visual impacts are demonstrated by identifying visual resources in the project area, measuring the amount of change that would occur as a result of the project, and predicting how the affected public would respond to or perceive those changes.

The Caltrans *Questionnaire to Determine Visual Impact Assessment (VIA) Level* and a preliminary review of the project were used to determine that a fully developed (moderate) VIA was appropriate for this project (refer to Attachment 1). This VIA follows the guidance outlined in the publication *Visual Impact Assessment for Highway Projects* published by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) in March 1981 and Caltrans *Moderate VIA Annotated Outline*.

II. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The project proposes to construct an overcrossing to extend Prado Road over U.S. 101, connecting with Dalidio Drive and reconstruct the existing U.S. 101 northbound on- and off-ramp connections to Prado Road to provide congestion relief, operational efficiency, and multimodal connectivity. U.S. 101 through the study area is currently a 4-lane divided freeway with auxiliary lanes provided between Madonna Road and Marsh Street.

Purpose & Need

The purpose of the project is to improve overall circulation and accessibility in the project area for all transportation modes. There is a need to provide better community connectivity between the existing and planned neighborhoods east and west of the U.S. Route 101 freeway and resolve forecasted operational deficiencies on State and City facilities. This connectivity need extends to all transportation modes.

Goals and objectives of the project include:

- To improve overall operations of U.S. Route 101 and adjacent interchanges;
- To improve safety and mobility for bicyclists and pedestrians;
- To improve transit performance and enhance transit opportunities; and
- Consistency with local, regional, and State planning.

Alternatives

This VIA examines five alternatives (refer to Attachment 2), including the no-build alternative. Each of these alternatives includes a partial interchange with the proposed Prado Road overcrossing constructed over U.S. 101 and new U.S. 101 northbound off-ramp and on-ramp from Prado Road. The alternatives assessed in this study are:

- **Alternative A1.** This alternative would include new overcrossing constructed over U.S. 101 connecting Dalidio Drive and Prado Road and a traffic signal control or roundabout (A1R) provided at the U.S. 101 northbound ramp intersection with Prado Road. The interchange configuration would be a Type L-1 tight diamond configuration on the east side of U.S. 101. Retaining walls are proposed on the inside of both the U.S. 101 northbound off-ramp to Prado Road and the Prado

Road northbound on-ramp to U.S. 101. An approximately 940-foot auxiliary lane is provided between the Prado Road northbound on-ramp and the Madonna Road northbound off-ramp. Prado Road would have a minimum 4-lane divided arterial section through the interchange with separate Class II bike lanes and pedestrian sidewalks. Prado Road (Dalidio Drive) would be extended west of U.S. 101 to the intersection with the future from Ranch Road/Dalidio Drive intersection.

Alternative A1 includes optional retaining walls along the outside of both the northbound off-ramp and northbound on-ramp, along the north side of Prado Road east of U.S. 101, and along the Prado Road (Dalidio Drive) extension west of U.S. 101 to the intersection with the future from Ranch Road/Dalidio Drive intersection. Depending on the option selected, Alternative A1 may require relocating Elks Lane around the east side of the Sunset Drive-In.

- **Alternative A3.** This alternative would include new overcrossing constructed over U.S. 101 connecting Dalidio Drive and Prado Road and a traffic signal control or roundabout (A3R) provided at the U.S. 101 northbound ramp intersection with Prado Road. The interchange configuration would be a Type L-1 tight diamond configuration on the east side of U.S. 101. Retaining walls are proposed on the inside of both the northbound off-ramp and the northbound on-ramp. An approximately 940-foot auxiliary lane is provided between the Prado Road northbound on-ramp and the Madonna Road northbound off-ramp. Prado Road would have a minimum 4-lane divided arterial section through the interchange with separate Class II bike lanes and pedestrian sidewalks. Prado Road (Dalidio Drive) would be extended west of U.S. 101 to the intersection with the future from Ranch Road/Dalidio Drive intersection.

Alternative A3 includes optional retaining walls along the outside of both the northbound off-ramp and northbound on-ramp, along the north side of Prado Road east of U.S. 101, and along the Prado Road (Dalidio Drive) extension west of U.S. 101 to the intersection with the future from Ranch Road/Dalidio Drive intersection. Depending on the option selected, Alternative A3 may require relocating Elks Lane around the east side of the Sunset Drive-In.

Note: The roundabout option for this alternative would be the same as described for Alternative A1R.

- **Alternative A4.** This alternative would include new overcrossing constructed over U.S. 101 connecting Dalidio Drive and Prado Road and a Type L-7 partial cloverleaf configuration for the on- and off-ramp on the east side of U.S. 101 connecting to a signalized intersection or roundabout (A4R) at the U.S. 101 northbound ramp intersection with Prado Road. It would also include a 2,000-foot auxiliary lane on the U.S. 101 between the Prado Road northbound on-ramp and the Madonna Road northbound off-ramp. Prado Road would have a minimum 4-lane divided arterial section through the interchange with separate Class II bike lanes and pedestrian sidewalks. Prado Road (Dalidio Drive) would be extended west of U.S. 101 to the intersection with the future From Ranch Road/Dalidio Drive intersection.

Alternative A4 includes optional retaining walls along the outside of the northbound off-ramp, along the north side of Prado Road east of U.S. 101, and along the Prado Road (Dalidio Drive) extension west of U.S. 101 to the intersection with the future From Ranch Road/Dalidio Drive intersection. Alternative A4 would retain the alignment of Elks Lane around the west side of the Sunset Drive-In.

- **Alternative A7.** This alternative would include new overcrossing constructed over U.S. 101 connecting Dalidio Drive and Prado Road and a Type L-6 interchange configuration on the east side of U.S. 101, except the off-ramp would merge with eastbound (EB) Prado Road prior to roundabout control provided at the Prado Road/Elks Lane intersection, while the on-ramp diverges from westbound (WB) Prado Road after the roundabout. This alternative would also include a 1,220-foot auxiliary lane on the U.S. 101 between the Prado Road northbound on-ramp and the Madonna Road northbound off-ramp. Prado Road would have a minimum 4-lane divided arterial section through the interchange with separate Class II bike lanes and pedestrian sidewalks. Prado Road (Dalidio Drive) would be extended west of U.S. 101 to the intersection with the future Froom Ranch Road/Dalidio Drive intersection.

Alternative A7 includes optional retaining walls along the outside of the northbound off-ramp, along the north side of Prado Road east of U.S. 101, and along the Prado Road (Dalidio Drive) extension west of U.S. 101 to the intersection with the future Froom Ranch Road/Dalidio Drive intersection. Depending on the option selected, Alternative A7 may require relocating Elks Lane around the east side of the Sunset Drive-In.

- **No Build Alternative.** This alternative would maintain the existing circulation. No connectivity improvements between the existing and planned neighborhoods east and west of the U.S. Route 101 freeway would occur.

Design

Design for auxiliary structures (i.e., retaining walls, piles, etc.) would be constructed in consistence with the City of San Luis Obispo Community Design Guidelines. The design, placement, site features, and visual treatments would relate to building architecture and site topography. These elements would be of the same quality in design and materials as the surrounding infrastructure.

III. PROJECT LOCATION AND SETTING

The project location and setting provides the context for determining the type and severity of changes to the existing visual environment. The terms *visual character* and visual quality are defined below and are used to further describe the visual environment. The project setting is also referred to as the corridor or project corridor which is defined as the area of land that is visible from, adjacent to, and outside the highway right-of-way, and is determined by topography, vegetation, and viewing distance.

The proposed project is located on U.S. 101 post mile 26.78, near the western terminus of Prado Road at U.S. 101 and Elks Lane in the City of San Luis Obispo in San Luis Obispo County, California. A portion of the project study area west of U.S. 101 is located outside the City of San Luis Obispo but is within the City's Sphere of Influence and part of the San Luis Ranch Specific Plan Area.

The project study area is an urban environment surrounded by commercial, light industrial, agricultural, public facilities, and future residential land uses east of U.S. 101, and commercial development and agricultural land west of the freeway. The portion of Prado Road included in the project study area is a two-lane road with a westbound left-turn lane along the entrance to the City of San Luis Obispo Corporation Yard. The portion of U.S. 101 included in the project study area is a four-lane divided freeway. Elks Lane in the project study area is a two-lane local route connecting Prado Road at U.S. 101 to South Higuera Street. The project study area also includes the U.S. 101 northbound on- and off-ramps to and from Prado Road.

A portion of the project would occur on a portion of U.S. 101 that is eligible for designation as a State Scenic Highway but is not officially designated. Prado Road and U.S. 101 have been identified in the City of San Luis Obispo General Plan as scenic corridors with views of scenic resources such as open space and agricultural land and more distant views of hillsides and the Morros¹. These scenic resources are located in the San Luis Ranch Specific Plan area, which includes an approved project that would develop single-family and multi-family residential development and commercial uses but would maintain a portion of the existing agricultural area west of U.S. 101 and in the hillsides that surround the City. Views of the preserved agricultural scenic resources from the project study area would be maintained with anticipated development of the San Luis Ranch Specific Plan area.

Figure 1 shows the regional location of the project study area, and Figure 2 identifies the project study area and the key views identified for the project study area. The key views are discussed in detail in Section V, *Visual Assessment Units and Key Views*.

IV. ASSESSMENT METHOD

This visual impact assessment generally follows the guidance outlined in the publication *Visual Impact Assessment for Highway Projects* published by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) in March 1981.

The following steps were followed to assess the potential visual impacts of the proposed project:

- A. Define the project location and setting.
- B. Identify visual assessment units and key views.
- C. Analyze existing visual resources, resource change and viewer response.
- D. Depict (*or describe*) the visual appearance of project alternatives.
- E. Assess the visual impacts of project alternatives.
- F. Propose measures to offset visual impacts.

Steps C, D, and E have been completed based on photographic evidence of existing conditions in the project vicinity, including key views of the project site, and visual descriptions and computer-generated visual renderings of the proposed alternatives. The visual renderings were developed using available engineering information for project components. Landscaping components have not yet been finalized and are shown schematically for scale. Hardscape details are shown as an approximation of anticipated features, to provide an example of a design pallet that coordinates with the surrounding area. The level of detail for these visual renderings is considered conceptual for image quality, and informational for contextual accuracy. Because these visual renderings are considered conceptual at this time, they do not illustrate tree removals which may be visible from key views. The key view photographs and visual renderings are shown in Figures KV-1 through KV-4 under Section VIII, *Visual Impact*.

V. VISUAL ASSESSMENT UNITS AND KEY VIEWS

For this project, only one visual assessment unit has been identified because the visual character and visual quality are consistent throughout the project study area. The project study area is characterized by an urban setting with surrounding vegetation characteristic of urban and developed areas, such as planted trees, shrubbery, landscaped medians and sidewalks, and non-native species. Four key views have been identified:

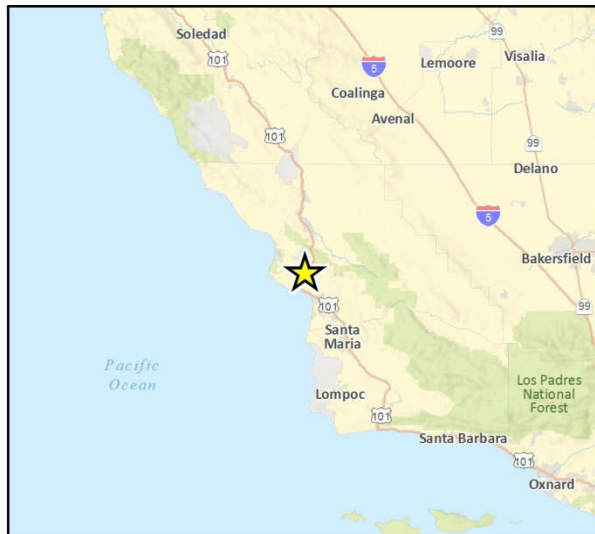
¹ A chain of nine volcanic mountains and hills in western San Luis Obispo County.

Figure 1 – Regional Location



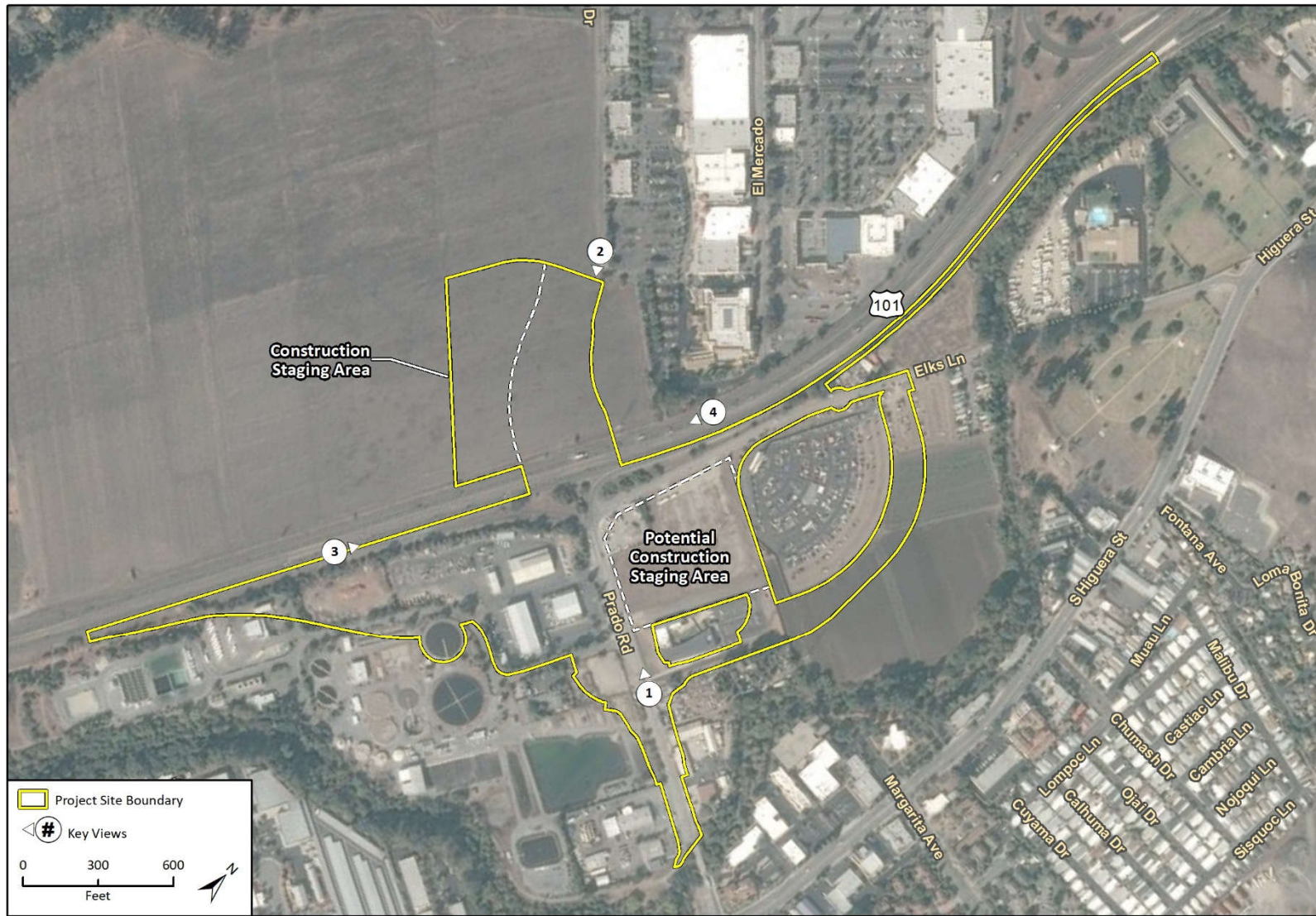
Imagery provided by Esri and its licensors © 2018.

★ Project Location



MS01 Fig. 1. Regional Location

Figure 2- Key Views



Imagery provided by Microsoft Bing and its licensors © 2021.

VIA Fig 1 Key Views

- Key View 1 – Prado Road, approximately 900 feet east of U.S. 101, looking west toward the proposed overcrossing at the center of the project study area; this view was selected because it would be the main approach to the project site from the east.
- Key View 2 – Dalidio Drive, approximately 800 feet northwest of U.S. 101, looking southeast toward the proposed overcrossing at the center of the project study area; this view was selected because it would be the main approach to the project site from the west.
- Key View 3 – U.S. 101 Northbound, approximately 1,000 feet south of the proposed overcrossing, looking north; this view was selected because the proposed overcrossing would be visible to northbound traffic on U.S. 101.
- Key View 4 – U.S. 101 Southbound, approximately 600 feet north of the proposed overcrossing, looking south; this view was selected because the proposed overcrossing would be visible to southbound traffic on U.S. 101.

VI. VISUAL RESOURCES AND RESOURCE CHANGE

Resource change is assessed by evaluating the visual character and the visual quality of the visual resources that comprise the project corridor before and after the construction of the proposed project. Resource change is one of the two major variables in the equation that determine visual impacts (the other is *viewer response*, discussed below in *Section VII Viewers and Viewer Response*). To evaluate resource change associated with the project, a field visit was conducted on October 15, 2018 to take photographs to characterize the visual characteristics of the project study area and establish the key views surrounding the project study area. To assess visual quality, the fourth approach outlined in the *FHWA's Visual Impact Assessment for Highway Projects* (pp. 46) was used. This approach assesses visual quality based on level of visual relationships of different visual components. The guidance states that "...professionals can use these relationships as valid and reliable criteria for evaluative appraisals of visual quality."

Visual Resources

Visual resources of the project setting are defined and identified below by assessing visual character and visual quality in the project corridor.

VISUAL CHARACTER

Visual character includes attributes such as form, line, color, texture, and is used to describe, not evaluate; that is these attributes are neither considered good nor bad. However, a change in visual character can be evaluated when it is compared with the viewer response to that change. Changes in visual character can be identified by how visually compatible a proposed project would be with the existing condition by using visual character attributes as an indicator. For this project the following attributes were considered:

Form – visual mass or shape. Vegetation located intermittently along U.S. 101, Prado Road, and Dalidio Drive adds natural form to the visually low-quality urban character as it partially obstructs views of surrounding public facilities and commercial development.

Dominance – position, size, or contrast. The dominant visual nature of the surrounding land uses and the existing roadways in this area are commercial, light industrial, public facilities, and associated infrastructure.

Scale – apparent size as it relates to the surroundings. The scale of the area is characterized by commercial and light industrial buildings that range from one- to four-story buildings and landscaping vegetation characteristic of urban and developed areas, such as planted trees, shrubbery, landscaped medians and sidewalks, and non-native species.

Proposed Changes in Visual Character. The visual character of the proposed project will be compatible with the existing visual character of the project study area. The project would construct an overcrossing over the U.S. 101 where one currently does not exist, elevated on- and off-ramps, and an additional traffic signal or roundabout at the U.S. 101 northbound ramp intersection with Prado Road. The proposed overcrossing, ramps, and additional traffic signal or roundabout would connect streets that are surrounded by different land use types but show similar form and scale to surrounding land uses and urban vegetation. The proposed overcrossing and elevated ramps would introduce a new visual mass along the U.S. 101 and the two connecting streets, Prado Road and Dalidio Drive. Depending on the view of the overcrossing and ramps, these structures could be a dominant new structure in the viewshed, altering the visual character of that view. The proposed overcrossing and ramps would be of similar height to existing buildings and urban vegetation, and would be of similar dominance as the buildings, infrastructure, and urban vegetation in and around the project study area. The urban vegetation, consisting of landscaped sidewalks, medians, and non-native trees, surrounding the project would continue to add natural form to the project area and would continue to obstruct views of surrounding public facilities, commercial development, and infrastructure, including the proposed overcrossing. Therefore, the project would be consistent with visual character of the existing roadways and commercial, light industrial, and public facilities land uses in the project study area.

Build Alternatives (Alternative A1, A3, A4, A7). Because the differences in each alternative are transportation-design focused and do not contain considerable differences visually, each alternative would result in a similar change in visual character within the project study area. Overall, these changes would result in low to moderate changes to the existing visual character of the project study area.

No Build Alternative. This alternative would maintain the existing visual character of the project study area.

VISUAL QUALITY

Visual quality is evaluated by identifying the vividness, intactness, and unity present in the project corridor. Public attitudes validate the assessed level of quality and predict how changes to the project corridor can affect these attitudes. This process helps identify specific methods for addressing each visual impact that may occur as a result of the project. The three criteria for evaluating visual quality are defined below:

Vividness is the extent to which the landscape is memorable and is associated with distinctive, contrasting, and diverse visual elements. The primary features of the landscape around the project study area that contribute to its vividness are the background hillsides, agricultural land, and intermittent vegetation along U.S. 101 and surrounding roadways, Prado Road and Dalidio Drive.

Intactness is the integrity of visual features in the landscape and the extent to which the existing landscape is free from non-typical visual intrusions. The project study area is generally free from non-typical visual intrusions except for views of some larger scale commercial buildings, public facilities, and electrical transmission infrastructure. Therefore, the integrity of the project area is moderately intact.

Unity is the extent to which all visual elements combine to form a coherent, harmonious visual pattern. The project study area includes sporadic views of adjacent commercial, light industrial, and public facilities land uses, broken up by intermittent views of tall urban landscaping

vegetation. However, the study area also includes a large agricultural area west of U.S. 101. As a result of these different uses within a relatively small study area, the area has a low overall degree of visual unity.

Proposed Changes in Visual Quality. The visual quality of the U.S. 101 and surrounding roadways will not be substantially altered by the project. The elevation of the overcrossing and ramps would be of similar height to the surrounding development and vegetation and would not obstruct views of surrounding hillsides. Although the scale of the overcrossing would not interrupt views of the primary features of the landscape in the project study area vicinity, the overcrossing would be a prominent feature in certain views, and consequently would alter the intactness of some views. However, the overcrossing and ramps would be of a similar scale as other overcrossing structures that are common north and south of the project study area along U.S. 101. Therefore, the overcrossing and ramps would not substantially degrade the overall vividness or unity of views of the surrounding landscape in the project study area vicinity. Traffic controls at the Prado Road/Elks Lane/U.S. 101 northbound ramp intersection would involve similar structural elements and a similar appearance as other existing intersections in the project study area vicinity. Therefore, the project would not affect unity of the area.

Build Alternatives (Alternative A1, A3, A4, A7). Because the differences in each alternative are transportation-design focused and do not contain considerable differences visually, each alternative would result in a similar change in visual quality within the project study area. Overall, these changes would result in low to moderate changes to the existing visual quality of the project study area.

No Build Alternative. This alternative would maintain the existing visual quality of the project study area.

Resource Change

The project will alter the visual character of the project study area and surroundings by constructing an overcrossing and elevated ramps, introducing a new visual mass along U.S. 101. The project would maintain a similar scale as the buildings, infrastructure, vegetation, and trees surrounding the project study area. The urban landscaping vegetation in the project study area would continue to add natural form to the project area and would continue to obstruct views of surrounding commercial and light industrial development, public facilities, and infrastructural elements, including the proposed overcrossing. Therefore, the project would be consistent with visual nature and diversity of the surrounding land uses and the existing roadways in this area. Depending from what location from which the project is viewed, the proposed overcrossing and elevated ramps may be the dominant feature in the viewshed. Therefore, the project would result in low to moderate changes to the existing visual character of the project study area.

The project will alter the visual quality of the project study area. The elevation of the overcrossing would be of similar height to the surrounding urban landscape vegetation and would not obstruct views of the surrounding hillsides, and consequently would maintain the vividness and unity of the project study area. However, depending on the viewpoint from which the project is viewed, the overcrossing and ramps would be prominent features in views of the surrounding landscape from the project study area, and consequently would alter the intactness of some views. The project would result in a low to moderate change in the visual quality of the project study area.

Overall, the Build Alternatives would result in a low to moderate change in visual character and a low to moderate change in visual quality. Overall, the Build Alternatives would result in a moderate-low change

to visual resources in the study area. The No Build Alternative would result in no change to visual resources in the study area.

VII. VIEWERS AND VIEWER RESPONSE

The population affected by the project is composed of *viewers*. Viewers are people whose views of the landscape may be altered by the proposed project—either because the landscape itself has changed or their perception of the landscape has changed.

Viewers, or more specifically the response viewers have to changes in their visual environment, are one of two variables that determine the extent of visual impacts that will be caused by the construction and operation of the proposed project. The other variable is the change to visual resources discussed earlier in *Section VII Visual Resources and Resource Change*.

Types of Viewers

There are two major types of viewer groups for highway projects: highway neighbors and highway users. Each viewer group has their own particular level of *viewer exposure* and *viewer sensitivity*, resulting in distinct and predictable visual concerns for each group which help to predict their responses to visual changes.

HIGHWAY NEIGHBORS (*Views to the Road*)

Highway neighbors are people who have views *to* the road. They can be subdivided into different viewer groups by land use. For example, residential, commercial, industrial, retail, institutional, civic, educational, recreational, and agricultural land uses may generate highway neighbors or viewer groups with distinct reasons for being in the corridor and therefore having distinct responses to changes in visual resources. For this project the following highway neighbors were considered:

- Viewers at surrounding commercial and light industrial uses

HIGHWAY USERS (*Views from the Road*)

Highway users are people who have views *from* the road. They can be subdivided into different viewer groups in two different ways—by mode of travel or by reason for travel. For example, subdividing highway users by mode of travel may yield pedestrians, bicyclists, transit riders, car drivers and passengers, and truck drivers. Dividing highway users or viewer groups by reason for travel creates categories like tourists, commuters, and haulers. It is also possible to use both mode and reason for travel simultaneously, creating a category like *bicycling tourists*, for example. For this project the following highway users were considered:

- Commuting drivers and passengers on U.S. 101, Prado Road, and Dalidio Drive
- Pedestrians and bicyclists on Prado Road and Dalidio Drive

Viewer Response

Viewer response is a measure or prediction of the viewer's reaction to changes in the visual environment and has two dimensions as previously mentioned, viewer exposure and viewer sensitivity.

VIEWER EXPOSURE

Viewer exposure is a measure of the viewer's ability to see a particular object. Viewer exposure has three attributes: location, quantity, and duration. *Location* relates to the position of the viewer in relationship to the object being viewed. The closer the viewer is to the object, the more exposure. *Quantity* refers to how many people see the object. The more people who can see an object or the

greater frequency an object is seen, the more exposure the object has to viewers. *Duration* refers to how long a viewer is able to keep an object in view. The longer an object can be kept in view, the more exposure. High viewer exposure helps predict that viewers will have a response to a visual change.

A portion of the project would occur on a portion of U.S. 101 that is eligible for designation as a State Scenic Highway but is not officially designated. Prado Road and U.S. 101 have been identified in the City of San Luis Obispo General Plan as scenic corridors with views of scenic resources, including open space and agricultural land. The San Luis Ranch Specific Plan area, which includes agricultural areas west of U.S. 101, is the site of an approved project that would develop single-family and multi-family residential development and commercial uses but would maintain a portion of the existing agricultural area west of U.S. 101. Views of these scenic resources from the project study area would be maintained with anticipated development of the San Luis Ranch Specific Plan area.

Users and employees at the surrounding commercial, light industrial, and public facility uses in the project study area have views of U.S. 101, Prado Road, and Dalidio Drive. However, because viewers would generally have to be outside of buildings or facilities due to limited interior views, these views are temporary, and are interrupted by surrounding urban landscaping vegetation and other structures and infrastructure in the study area. Viewers with more distant views include the employees, visitors, and volunteers at the SLO City Farm located 0.4 miles south of project study area. Due to the distance from the project area, views of the project site from this location are limited. Planned development within the San Luis Ranch Specific Plan would obstruct most views of the project from the SLO City Farm. Therefore, viewer exposure to highway neighbors is low.

Pedestrians and bicyclists on Prado Road and Dalidio Drive have views along these roads and of the U.S. 101. Due to the commercial and light industrial land uses, and lack of dining, entertainment, small-scale retail, and sidewalk connectivity across U.S. 101, the volume of pedestrians in the project study area is low. Views are interrupted by surrounding urban landscaping vegetation and existing structures and infrastructure; therefore, pedestrian exposure is low. Bicyclists use Prado roads to connect to the Bob Jones Bike Trail located on the SLO Water Resource Recovery Facility east of the study area. Bicyclists' views are also temporary and interrupted by surrounding urban landscaping vegetation and existing structures and infrastructure. However, there is a higher volume of bicyclists along Prado Road. As a result, bicyclist exposure to the project is moderate.

Travelers (commuting drivers and passengers) along Prado Road, and Dalidio Drive primarily consist of commuters entering and exiting the U.S. 101 on- and of-ramps, and commuters going to or returning from commercial, light industrial, and public services uses in the project study area, as well as residential areas farther from the highway. Traffic volumes on Prado Road and Dalidio Drive are lower than traffic volumes on U.S. 101. With the planned connection through the project study area, traffic volumes along these roadways would increase. However, vehicle speeds would also increase as these roadways are joined to form a new arterial connection through the City, reducing the duration of exposure and decreasing engagement with views of the surrounding landscape.

Travelers on U.S. 101 are primarily passing through the project study area at highway speeds, in addition to those entering and exiting U.S. 101 northbound from Prado Road. Travelers on U.S. 101 would be the most numerous viewers of the project but have a relatively low duration of exposure and low engagement with the surrounding landscape due to the high rate of speed through this corridor. Travelers going north on the U.S. 101 would be able to see the project approximately 0.9 mile away (after

passing under the existing overcrossing at Los Osos Valley Road). When traveling at the posted speed limit of 65 miles per hour, these viewers would have views of the project for a maximum of 50 seconds $[0.9 \text{ mile} \div (65 \text{ miles/hour}) \times (60 \text{ minutes/hour}) \times (3,600 \text{ seconds/60 minutes}) = 50 \text{ seconds}]$. Travelers going south on the U.S. 101 would be able to see the project approximately 0.2 miles away (after passing the freeway curve north of the project area). When traveling at the posted speed limit of 65 miles per hour, these viewers would have views of the project for a maximum of 11 seconds $[0.2 \text{ mile} \div (65 \text{ miles/hour}) \times (60 \text{ minutes/hour}) \times (3,600 \text{ seconds/60 minutes}) = 11 \text{ seconds}]$.

Overall, due to the project's urban location, low engagement, and short duration of views from the project study area, viewer exposure to the project is moderate.

VIEWER SENSITIVITY

Viewer sensitivity is a measure of the viewer's recognition of a particular object. It has three attributes: activity, awareness, and local values. *Activity* relates to the preoccupation of viewers—are they preoccupied, thinking of something else, or are they truly engaged in observing their surroundings. The more they are actually observing their surroundings, the more sensitivity viewers will have of changes to visual resources. *Awareness* relates to the focus of view—the focus is wide and the view general or the focus is narrow and the view specific. The more specific the awareness, the more sensitive a viewer is to change. *Local values* and attitudes also affect viewer sensitivity. If the viewer group values aesthetics in general or if a specific visual resource has been protected by local, state, or national designation, it is likely that viewers will be more sensitive to visible changes. High viewer sensitivity helps predict that viewers will have a high concern for any visual change.

Users and employees at the surrounding commercial, light industrial, and public facility uses in the project study area are either walking from parking areas to land uses along Prado Road, or working outside at the adjacent land uses; therefore, their engagement and sensitivity to changes in immediate views is low. Immediate views from commercial, light industrial, and public facilities uses in the project study area aren't considered to have any special value. However, due to the views available of the surrounding hillsides, sensitivity to changes in distant views is moderate to high (per the City's General Plan). Therefore, the overall sensitivity of highway neighbors is moderate.

As discussed in *Viewer Exposure*, pedestrian activity in this area is low. Pedestrian awareness is greater than that of users at nearby land uses, but is still generally low, resulting in low sensitivity. Also discussed in *Viewer Exposure*, views of the project from users at the SLO City Farm are limited due to the distance from the project site and planned development in the area, resulting in low sensitivity. Activity and awareness of bicyclists on Prado Road and Dalidio Drive would be increased by the project. The project would provide a bicycle connection across U.S. 101, facilitating connectivity in the local bicycle network. Therefore, bicycle users would become more sensitive to views in the project study area, and overall, bicyclist sensitivity would be high.

Due to the urbanized form of the area, travelers along Prado Road, Dalidio Drive, and U.S. 101 would be less sensitive to changes in visual environment associated with the project. On-road users have low engagement with the adjacent landscape and anticipate views of roadways and infrastructure. Therefore, on-road travelers through the project study area have low to moderate sensitivity.

Overall, due to the project’s urban location and relatively low user engagement, pedestrians, bicyclists, travelers in the project study area would be moderately sensitive to visual changes along U.S. 101, Prado Road, and Dalidio Drive.

GROUP VIEWER RESPONSE

The narrative descriptions of viewer exposure and viewer sensitivity for each viewer group were merged to establish the overall viewer response of each group. Commuting drivers and passengers comprise the largest group of viewers and have a low exposure and low to moderate sensitivity to visual changes in the project study area, because of their high rate of travel and low-level of engagement with their immediate surroundings. Even though bicyclists would comprise a smaller amount of viewers, bicyclists would have moderate exposure and high sensitivity. Overall group viewer response would be moderate.

VIII. VISUAL IMPACT

Visual impacts are determined by assessing changes to the visual resources and predicting viewer response to those changes. These impacts can be beneficial or detrimental. Cumulative impacts and temporary impacts due to the contractor’s operations are also considered. A generalized visual impact assessment process is illustrated in the following diagram:

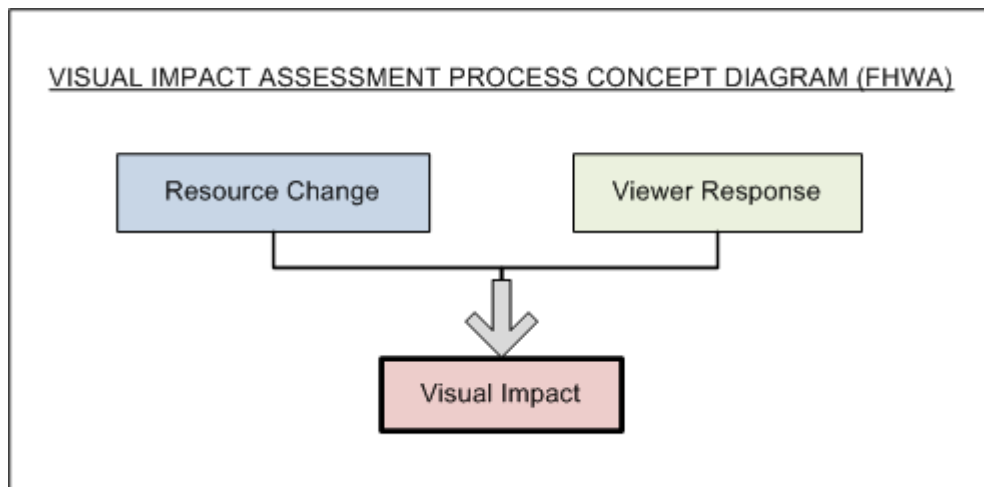


Table 1 provides a reference for determining levels of visual impact by combining resource change and viewer response.

TABLE 1.						
Visual Impact Ratings Using Viewer Response and Resource Change						
	Viewer Response (VR)					
		Low (L)	Moderate-Low (ML)	Moderate (M)	Moderate-High (MH)	High (H)
Resource Change (RC)	Low (L)	L	ML	ML	M	M
	Moderate-Low (ML)	ML	ML	M	M	MH
	Moderate (M)	ML	M	M	MH	MH
	Moderate-High (MH)	M	M	MH	MH	H
	High (H)	M	MH	MH	H	H

Visual Impacts by Visual Assessment Unit and Alternative

Because it is not feasible to analyze all the views in which the proposed project would be seen, it is necessary to select a number of key views associated with visual assessment units that would most clearly demonstrate the change in the project’s visual resources. Key views also represent the viewer groups that have the highest potential to be affected by the project considering exposure and sensitivity. In addition, these key views will be analyzed for each proposed alternative.

This VIA also considers the potential impacts of a No-Build Alternative. If the project were not constructed, the study area would not be expected to experience visual change, except for the development of the San Luis Ranch Specific Plan area adjacent to the project study area to the west. The project study area would remain moderately coherent and unified.

The following section describes and illustrates visual impacts by comparing proposed alternatives and includes the predicted viewer response.

KEY VIEW 1 (KV-1) – From Prado Road looking west toward U.S. 101, approximately 900 feet east of U.S. 101.



In the vicinity of KV-1, Prado Road provides views of surrounding urban vegetation consisting of non-native trees, shrubbery and landscaped medians and sidewalks along Prado Road as well as adjacent commercial, light industrial, and public facilities development. As shown in the photo of KV-1, the roadway, utility poles, and urban vegetation are the dominant features in the area and present a relatively unified visual character. The dominance of the roadway and form of the urban vegetation contribute to the visual character and quality of the area.

Viewer Response

The overall level of viewer response by travelers on Prado Road is moderate at KV-1, in the westward direction, primarily due to moderate exposure to the project by drivers, passengers, and bicyclists, and moderate sensitivity of these viewers. Although the number of viewers from this location is relatively low under current conditions, the proposed overcrossing would create a connection through the project study area that would increase the number of users, and new users would have moderate-high exposure and moderate sensitivity to the project. Overall, viewer response would be moderate.

KV-1 – Visual rendering from Prado Road looking west toward U.S. 101.



Resource Change

Build Alternatives (A1, A3, A4, A7). The proposed overcrossing and elevated ramps would not substantially change the overall scale of the area's features or form that contribute to the visual character and quality of the area. Due to the introduction of additional roadway infrastructure and potential removal of non-native trees, the project would result in moderate change to the visual character and quality of this view. Even though it would not substantially change the area's vividness or unity, it would introduce additional intrusions to existing views, impacting intactness. The level of resource change would be moderate-low.

No Build Alternative. No resource change would occur with this alternative.

KV-2 – Dalidio Drive looking east toward U.S. 101, approximately 800 feet west of U.S. 101.



In the vicinity of KV-2, Dalidio Road provides views of U.S. 101, commercial development to the east, agriculture to the south and southwest, and surrounding vegetation and trees. As shown in the photo of KV-2, surrounding commercial development and associated landscaping vegetation, agriculture land, and transmission towers are the dominant features in the area. The scale of these features contributes to the visual character and quality of the area. Even though this key view lacks vividness, it has intrusions resulting in moderate intactness and unity.

Viewer Response

The overall level of viewer response by travelers on Dalidio Road would be moderate at KV-2, in the eastward direction, primarily due to moderate exposure to the project by drivers, passengers, and bicyclists, and moderate sensitivity of these viewers. Although the number of viewers from this location is relatively low under current conditions, the proposed overcrossing would create a connection through the project study area that would increase the number of users, and new users would have moderate-high exposure and moderate sensitivity to the project. Overall, viewer response would be moderate-low.

KV-2 – Visual rendering from Dalidio Drive looking east toward U.S. 101.



Resource Change

Build Alternatives (A1, A3, A4, A7). The proposed overcrossing and elevated ramps would change the overall scale of the area's features or form that contribute to the visual character and quality of this area, because a primary component of the visual character in this location is existing agricultural use. The project would result in moderate-high change to the visual character and quality of this view. Even though it would not substantially change the area's unity, it would add a new dominant infrastructural feature to a primarily agricultural location, impacting vividness and intactness, and would introduce additional intrusions to existing views, impacting intactness. The overall level of resource change would be moderate-high.

No Build Alternative. No resource change would occur with this alternative.

KV-3 – U.S. 101 Northbound approximately 1,000 feet from the project.



In the vicinity of KV-3, U.S. 101 northbound provides views of surrounding hillsides, vegetation and minor views of commercial development. As shown in the photo of KV-3, the surrounding landscape is the prominent feature resulting in moderate visual character and quality of the area. The urban landscaping vegetation along the highway boundaries, transmission towers, and hillside landscape are the dominant features in the area. The dominance of the highway and scale of these surrounding features contribute to the visual character and quality of the area. The hillsides provide vividness due to the limited intrusions, and this view has moderate-high intactness and unity.

KV-3 – Visual rendering from U.S. 101 Northbound.



Viewer Response

The overall level of viewer response by travelers on U.S. 101 northbound is moderate at KV-3, primarily due to moderate exposure to the project and moderate-low sensitivity of the viewers. As shown in the visual rendering of KV-3, exposure to the project would be moderate because the overcrossing would be clearly visible to drivers travelling northbound. However, drivers and passengers travel at a high rate, and views of the overcrossing would be short in duration and similar to views of overcrossing structures that are common north and south of the project study area along U.S. 101, resulting in low awareness. In addition, the proposed overcrossing would be of a similar scale as other overcrossing structures north and south of the project study area and are part of viewer expectations when traveling along this corridor. The high number of drivers, their activity, and local expectations would cause viewer sensitivity to moderate-low overall.

Resource Change

Build Alternatives (A1, A3, A4, A7). The project would not substantially change the overall scale of the area's features or form that contribute to the visual character and quality of the area. The proposed overcrossing and elevated ramps would not change the area's vividness or unity. However, it would introduce additional intrusions to existing views and may involve the limited removal of trees, impacting intactness. The level of resource change would be moderate.

No Build Alternative. No resource change would occur with this alternative.

KV-4 – U.S. 101 Southbound approximately 600 feet from the project



In the vicinity of KV-4, U.S. 101 southbound provides views of surrounding vegetation, electrical transmission towers, and partial views of hillsides. As shown in the photo of KV-4, the surrounding vegetation, partial views of hillsides, and transmission towers are the prominent features resulting in moderate visual character and quality of the area. The transmission tower is a dominant feature on southbound U.S. 101, as it is larger in scale than the surrounding environment. The hillsides and urban vegetation provide vividness but, due to the amount of visual intrusions, this view has moderate intactness and unity.

KV-4 – Visual rendering from U.S. 101 Southbound.



Viewer Response

The overall level of viewer response by travelers on U.S. 101 northbound is moderate at KV-3, primarily due to moderate exposure to the project and moderate-low sensitivity of the viewers. As shown in the visual rendering of KV-3, exposure to the project would be moderate because the overcrossing would be clearly visible to drivers travelling northbound. However, drivers and passengers travel at a high rate, and views of the overcrossing would be short in duration and similar to views of overcrossing structures that are common north and south of the project study area along U.S. 101, resulting in low awareness. In addition, the proposed overcrossing would be of a similar scale as other overcrossing structures north and south of the project study area and are part of viewer expectations when traveling along this corridor. The high number of drivers, their activity, and local expectations would cause viewer sensitivity to moderate-low overall.

Resource Change

Build Alternatives (A1, A3, A4, A7). The project would not substantially change the overall scale of the area's features or form that contribute to the visual character and quality of the area. The proposed overcrossing and elevated ramps would not change the area's vividness or unity; however, it would introduce additional intrusions to existing views, impacting intactness. The level of resource change would be moderate.

No Build Alternative. No resource change would occur with this alternative.

SUMMARY OF VISUAL IMPACTS

Table 2 summarizes and compares the narrative ratings for visual resource change, viewer response and visual impacts between alternatives for each key view.

TABLE 2.						
Summary of Key View Narrative Ratings						
KEY VIEW	BUILD ALTS			NO BUILD ALT		
	Resource Change	Viewer Response	Visual Impact	Resource Change	Viewer Response	Visual Impact
1	ML	M	M	None	None	None
2	MH	M	MH	None	None	None
3	M	ML	M	None	None	None
4	M	ML	M	None	None	None

SUMMARY OF VISUAL IMPACTS BY ALTERNATIVE

A summary of visual impacts has been prepared for the following alternatives:

Build Alternatives (A1, A3, A4, A7)

Build Alternatives would have moderate visual impacts from Prado Road (KV-1), moderate-high visual impacts from Dalidio Drive (KV-2), and moderate visual impacts from U.S. 101 southbound, and U.S. 101 northbound (KV-3 and KV-4), resulting in an overall moderate to moderate- visual impact.

No Build Alternative

The No Build Alternative would not result in any resource changes or new viewer responses. Therefore, this alternative would not result in any visual impacts.

IX. PROJECT VISUAL IMPACT SUMMARY

The overall visual impact of the project would be moderate to moderate-low. All Build Alternatives would result in similar visual impacts to the project study area.

Overall visual impacts to the Prado Road and Dalidio Drive viewsheds are moderate to moderate-high. The level of viewer response by travelers on Prado Road and Dalidio Road is moderate primarily due to higher exposure to the project by drivers, passengers, and bicyclists, and moderate sensitivity of these viewers. The project would cause a moderate-low level of resource change at areas along Prado Road because it would be generally consistent with the scale of urban vegetation and agriculture land that contribute to the visual character. The project would cause a moderate-high level of resource change at areas along Dalidio Drive because it would add a new dominant infrastructural feature to a primarily agricultural location.

Overall visual impacts to U.S. 101 southbound and northbound viewsheds are moderate to moderate-low. The level of viewer response by travelers on U.S. 101 Northbound is moderate-low due to moderate

exposure to the project and low sensitivity of the viewers. The project would cause a moderate level of resource change because the project would introduce an additional intrusion that would be dominant intrusion in the viewshed.

Temporary Construction Visual Impacts

Construction of the project may last as long as 12 months. Visual impacts during phases of construction would include lighting to provide visibility for construction workers, roadside staging areas, and grading and removal of vegetation. Required safety devices such as orange cones and delineators, fencing and signs also would affect views. However, such impacts would be temporary in nature and therefore low in degree.

X. CUMULATIVE VISUAL IMPACT

Cumulative impacts are those resulting from past, present and reasonably foreseeable future actions, combined with the potential visual impacts of this project. For this project, it has been determined that the following cumulative visual impacts may occur. Because the project study area surroundings are not fully built out for Single-Family, Multi-Family Residential, Commercial, and Educational uses as designated in the City General Plan and the San Luis Ranch Specific Plan, planned and foreseeable development in the vicinity of the project study area has potential to change the visual character of the area. Because the project would facilitate City-wide transportation needs associated with buildout of the San Luis Ranch Specific Plan area and other anticipated development in the City, and because the project and would be smaller in scale than anticipated development on adjacent properties, and consistent in scale with existing commercial, light industrial, and public facilities structures and infrastructure, including roadways and intersections, the visual impacts of the project would not result in a cumulatively considerable contribution to visual impacts from planned development in the project study area vicinity.

XI. AVOIDANCE, MINIMIZATION, AND/OR MITIGATION MEASURES

Caltrans and the FHWA mandate that a qualitative/aesthetic approach should be taken to address visual quality loss in the project area. This approach fulfills the letter and the spirit of FHWA requirements because it addresses the actual cumulative loss of visual quality due to a project. This approach also results in avoidance, minimization, and/or mitigation measures that can lessen or compensate for a loss in visual quality. The inclusion of aesthetic features in the project design, discussed in *Section II*, can help generate public acceptance of a project. This section describes additional avoidance, minimization, and/or mitigation measures to address specific visual impacts. These will be designed and implemented with concurrence of the District Landscape Architect. Project design will be similar to design of overpass crossings in the area and landscaping within the Caltrans Right-of-Way will follow all applicable Caltrans guidelines, including recommendations related to lighting and signage.

The following measure to avoid or minimize visual impacts will be incorporated into the project:

1. Tree Protection and Replacement. All trees not proposed for removal shall be preserved and protected from harm. If during the design process it is discovered that trees within the project study area must be removed, the Caltrans Design Engineer and District Landscape Architect shall concur that tree removal is necessary prior to final approval of the project plans. Where trees are authorized by Caltrans for removal, they shall be replaced with native or other horticulturally-appropriate species suitable for the area at a minimum ratio of three new trees for each tree removed, as directed by the Caltrans District Landscape Architect. To ensure success of this mitigation

measure, all replacement planting shall include a minimum three-year plant establishment period.

2. **Landscape Plan.** A landscape plan shall be developed by the City and approved by the District Landscape Architect prior to project approval. The landscape plan shall consist of plantings that offer variety of color, shape and species with an emphasis on drought tolerant, native plant materials. The landscape plan shall include plantings along constructed walls and structures as well as benched and graded areas within the project corridor to soften visual changes and reduce the visual scale of new project features. Landscaping shall be overseen for a minimum period of two years as determined by the District Landscape Architect.

The design plans shall identify all trees within the project limits. The project specifications shall include provisions requiring the protection of all trees as directed in this measure, and the cost estimate shall include adequate funds for identified tree protection measures, and tree replacement and maintenance measures, if necessary.

Measure 1 serves as a visual resource impact reduction measure and does not constitute a replacement or substitution for biological resource impact reduction measures.

Summary of Avoidance, Minimization, and/or Mitigation Measures

Table 3 summarizes the avoidance, minimization, and/or mitigation measure for each alternative.

TABLE 3. Summary of Avoidance, Minimization, and/or Mitigation Measures by Alternative		
ALTERNATIVE	AVOIDANCE AND MINIMIZATION	MITIGATION
Alternative 1	Measure 1	Measure 1
Alternative 3	Measure 1	Measure 1
Alternative 4	Measure 1	Measure 1
Alternative 7	Measure 1	Measure 1
No Build Alternative	None	None

XII. CONCLUSIONS

Measure 1 would reduce the project’s moderate to low-moderate visual impacts as seen from U.S. 101, Prado Road, and Dalidio Drive. Tree protection and replacement in the project study area with appropriate plant species would minimize any impacts if trees would be removed and would prevent the degradation of visual quality from the removal of existing trees. Even though the project would not cause detrimental visual impacts due to the scale of the project and the character of the study area and surroundings, implementation of Measure 1 would ensure that the long-term visual impact of the project would be low. The measure would reintroduce the visual elements that could be lost by the removal of the existing mature trees in the project study area, and therefore, no substantial reduction in long-term resource change would occur.

XIII. REFERENCES

California Department of Transportation (Caltrans). California Scenic Highway Mapping System. September 7, 2011. Available at: http://www.dot.ca.gov/hq/LandArch/16_livability/scenic_highways/index.htm

Google Street View. Available online at: <https://maps.google.com/>

Rincon Consultants, Inc. Field visit. October 15, 2018.

Questionnaire to Determine Visual Impact Assessment (VIA) Level

Use the following questions and subsequent score as a guide to help determine the appropriate level of VIA documentation. This questionnaire assists the VIA preparer (i.e. Landscape Architect) in estimating the probable visual impacts of a proposed project on the environment and in understanding the degree and breadth of the possible visual issues. The goal is to develop a suitable document strategy that is thorough, concise and defensible.

Enter the project name and consider each of the ten questions below. Select the response that most closely applies to the proposed project and corresponding number on the right side of the table. Points are automatically computed at the bottom of the table and the total score should be matched to one of the five groups of scores at the end of the questionnaire that include recommended levels of VIA study and associated annotated outlines (i.e., minor, moderate, advanced/complex).

This scoring system should be used as a preliminary guide and should not be used as a substitute for objective analysis on the part of the preparer. Although the total score may recommend a certain level of VIA document, circumstances associated with any one of the ten question-areas may indicate the need to elevate the VIA to a greater level of detail. For projects done by others on the State Highway System, the District Landscape Architect should be consulted when scoping the VIA level and provide concurrence on the level of analysis used.

The Standard Environmental Reference, Environmental Handbook, Volume I: Chapter 27-Visual & Aesthetics Review lists preparer qualifications for conducting the visual impact assessment process. Landscape Architects receive formal training in the area of visual resource management and can appropriately determine which VIA level is appropriate.

Preparer Qualifications:

[“Scenic Resource Evaluations and VIAs are performed under the direction of licensed Landscape Architects. Landscape Architects receive formal training in the area of visual resource management with a curriculum that emphasizes environmental design, human factors, and context sensitive solutions. When recommending specific visual mitigation measures, Landscape Architects can appropriately weigh the benefits of these different measures and consider construction feasibility and maintainability.”](#)

Calculate VIA Level Score

PROJECT NAME: U.S. 101/Prado Road Interchange	
PROJECT IDENTIFICATION #: 1H640K	
PREPARER NAME: Chris Bersbach, Rincon Consultants; Robert Carr, LA CA Lic. 3473	
FOR PROJECTS ON STATE HIGHWAY SYSTEM ONLY, NAME OF CALTRANS DISTRICT LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT (DLA) PROVIDING VIA QUESTIONNAIRE SCORE CONCURRENCE- IF DIFFERENT THAN ABOVE: <input type="text"/>	
CHANGE TO VISUAL ENVIRONMENT	
<p>1. Will the project result in a noticeable change in the physical characteristics of the existing environment?</p> <p><i>Consider all project components and construction impacts - both permanent and temporary, including landform changes, structures, noise barriers, vegetation removal, railing, signage, and contractor activities.</i></p>	High Level of Change (3 points) ▼
<p>2. Will the project complement or contrast with the visual character desired by the community?</p> <p>Evaluate the scale and extent of the project features compared to the surrounding scale of the community. Is the project likely to give an urban appearance to an existing rural or suburban community? Do you anticipate that the change will be viewed by the public as positive or negative? Research planning documents, or talk with local planners and community</p>	Moderate Compatibility (2 points) ▼

<p>representatives to understand the type of visual environment local residents envision for their community.</p>	
<p>3. What level of local concern is there for the types of project features (e.g., bridge structures, large excavations, sound barriers, or median planting removal) and construction impacts that are proposed?</p> <p>Certain project improvements can be of special interest to local citizens, causing a heightened level of public concern, and requiring a more focused visual analysis.</p>	<p>Moderate Concern (2 points) ▼</p>
<p>4. Will the project require redesign or realignment to minimize adverse change or will mitigation, such as landscape or architectural treatment, likely be necessary?</p> <p>Consider the type of changes caused by the project, i.e., can undesirable views be screened or will desirable views be permanently obscured so a redesign should be considered?</p>	<p>Mitigation Likely (1 point) ▼</p>
<p>5. Will this project, when seen collectively with other projects, result in an aggregate adverse change (cumulative impacts) in overall visual quality or character?</p> <p>Identify any projects (both Caltrans and local) in the area that have been constructed in recent years and those currently planned for future construction. The window of time and the extent of area applicable to possible cumulative impacts should be based on a reasonable anticipation of the viewing public's perception.</p>	<p>Cumulative Impacts Likely to Occur Within 6-10 Years (2 points) ▼</p>
<p>VIEWER SENSITIVITY</p>	
<p>1. What is the potential that the project proposal will be controversial within the community, or opposed by any organized group?</p> <p>This can be researched initially by talking with Caltrans and local agency management and staff familiar with the affected community's sentiments as evidenced by past projects and/or current information.</p>	<p>Moderate Potential (2 points) ▼</p>
<p>2. How sensitive are potential viewer-groups likely to be regarding visible changes proposed by the project?</p> <p>Consider among other factors the number of viewers within the group, probable viewer expectations, activities, viewing duration, and orientation. The expected viewer sensitivity level may be scoped by applying professional judgment, and by soliciting information from other Caltrans staff, local agencies and community representatives familiar with the affected community's sentiments and demonstrated concerns.</p>	<p>Moderate Sensitivity (2 points) ▼</p>
<p>3. To what degree does the project's aesthetic approach appear to be consistent with applicable laws, ordinances, regulations, policies or standards?</p> <p>Although the State is not always required to comply with local planning ordinances, these documents are critical in understanding the importance that communities place on aesthetic issues. The Caltrans Environmental Planning branch may have copies of the planning documents that</p>	<p>High Compatibility (1 point) ▼</p>

<p>pertain to the project. If not, this information can be obtained by contacting the local planning department. Also, many local and state planning documents can be found online at the California Land Use Planning Network.</p>	
<p>4. Are permits going to be required by outside regulatory agencies (i.e., Federal, State, or local)?</p> <p>Permit requirements can have an unintended consequence on the visual environment. Anticipated permits, as well as specific permit requirements - which are defined by the permitted, may be determined by talking with the project Environmental Planner and Project Engineer. Note: coordinate with the Caltrans representative responsible for obtaining the permit prior to communicating directly with any permitting agency.</p>	<p>Maybe (2 points) ▼</p>
<p>5. Will the project sponsor or public benefit from a more detailed visual analysis in order to help reach consensus on a course of action to address potential visual impacts?</p> <p>Consider the proposed project features, possible visual impacts, and probable mitigation recommendations.</p>	<p>Yes (3 points) ▼</p>
<p><input type="button" value="Calculate Total"/></p> <p>It is recommended that you print a copy of these calculations for the project file.</p>	
<p>PROJECT SCORE: 20</p>	

Select An Outline Based Upon Project Score

The total score will indicate the recommended VIA level for the project. In addition to considering circumstances relating to any one of the ten questions-areas that would justify elevating the VIA level, also consider any other project factors that would have an effect on level selection.

SCORE 6-9

No noticeable visual changes to the environment are proposed and no further analysis is required. Print out a copy of this completed questionnaire for your project file or Preliminary Environmental Study (PES).

SCORE 10-14

Negligible visual changes to the environment are proposed. A brief [Memorandum](#) (see sample) addressing visual issues providing a rationale why a technical study is not required.

SCORE 15-19

Noticeable visual changes to the environment are proposed. An abbreviated VIA is appropriate in this case. The assessment would briefly describe project features, impacts and any avoidance and minimization measures. Visual simulations would be optional. Go to the [Directions](#) for using and accessing the Minor VIA Annotated Outline.

SCORE 20-24

Noticeable visual changes to the environment are proposed. A fully developed VIA is appropriate. This technical study will likely receive public review. Go to the [Directions](#) for using and accessing the Moderate VIA Annotated Outline.

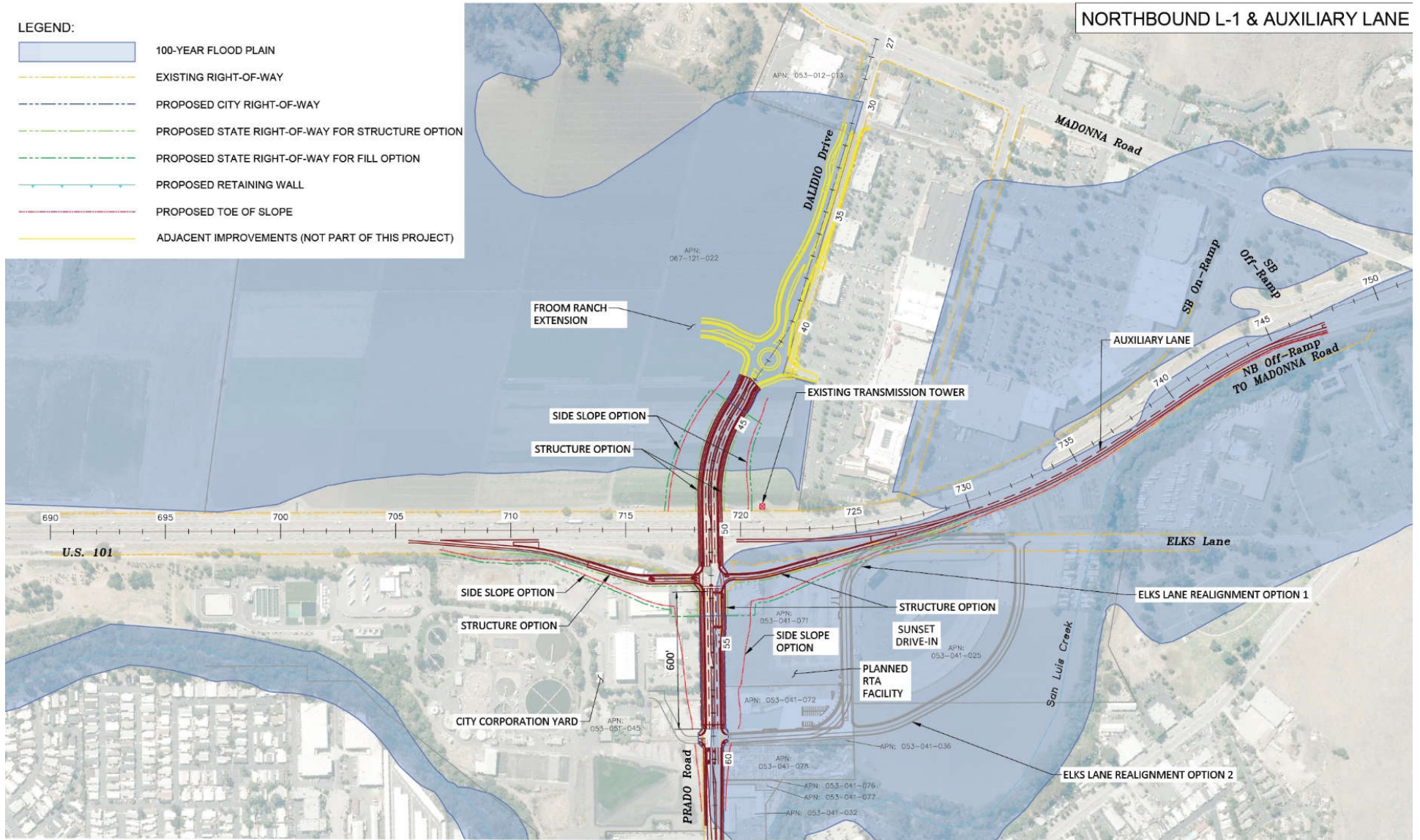
SCORE 25-30

Noticeable visual changes to the environment are proposed. A fully developed VIA is appropriate that includes photo simulations. It is appropriate to alert the Project Development Team to the potential for highly adverse impacts and to consider project alternatives to avoid those impacts. Go to the [Directions](#) for using and accessing the Advanced/Complex VIA Annotated Outline.

Alternative A1 Concept

LEGEND:

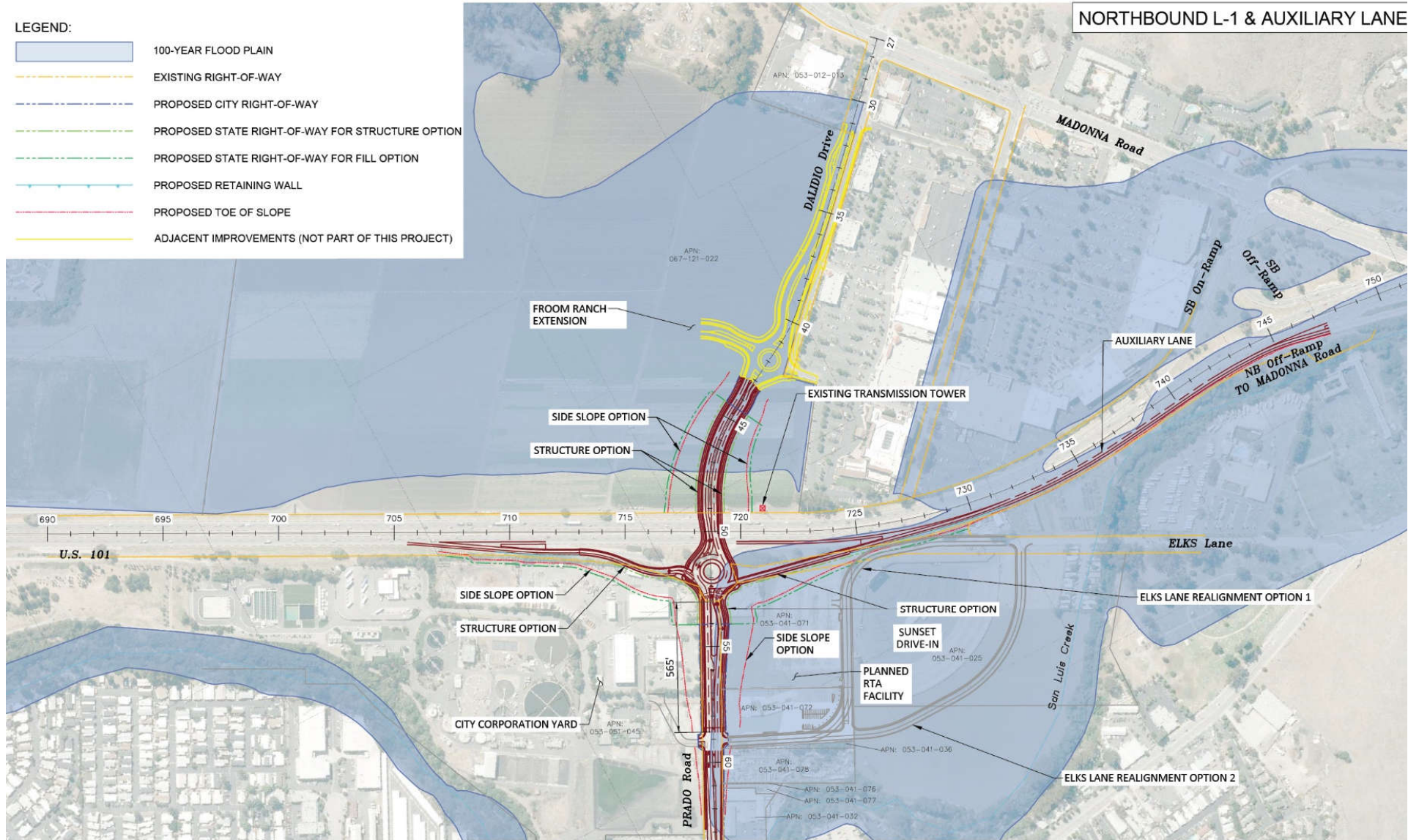
- 100-YEAR FLOOD PLAIN
- EXISTING RIGHT-OF-WAY
- PROPOSED CITY RIGHT-OF-WAY
- PROPOSED STATE RIGHT-OF-WAY FOR STRUCTURE OPTION
- PROPOSED STATE RIGHT-OF-WAY FOR FILL OPTION
- PROPOSED RETAINING WALL
- PROPOSED TOE OF SLOPE
- ADJACENT IMPROVEMENTS (NOT PART OF THIS PROJECT)



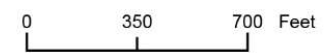
Source: GHD, 2021.

Alternative A1R Concept

- LEGEND:**
- 100-YEAR FLOOD PLAIN
 - EXISTING RIGHT-OF-WAY
 - PROPOSED CITY RIGHT-OF-WAY
 - PROPOSED STATE RIGHT-OF-WAY FOR STRUCTURE OPTION
 - PROPOSED STATE RIGHT-OF-WAY FOR FILL OPTION
 - PROPOSED RETAINING WALL
 - PROPOSED TOE OF SLOPE
 - ADJACENT IMPROVEMENTS (NOT PART OF THIS PROJECT)

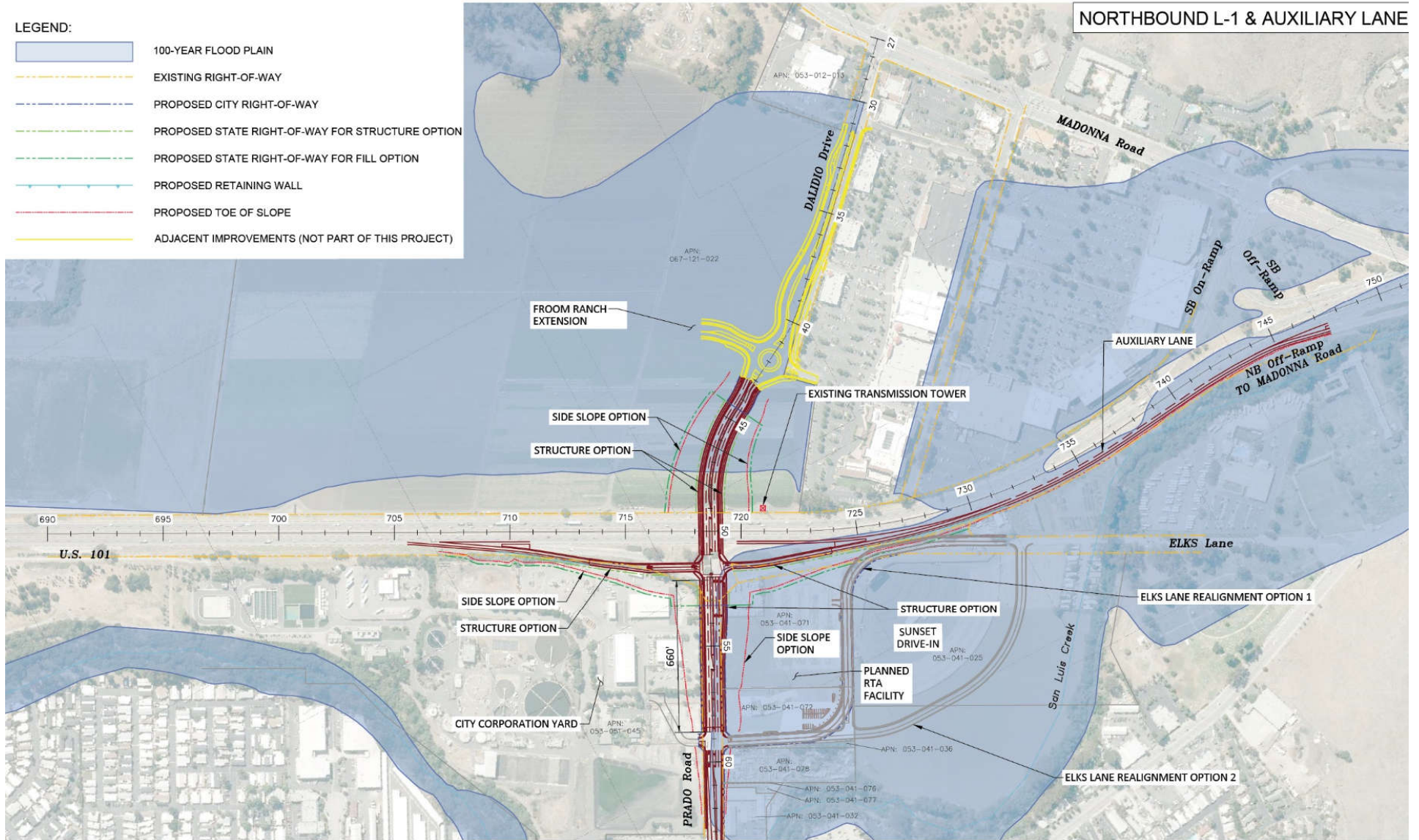


Source: GHD, 2021.

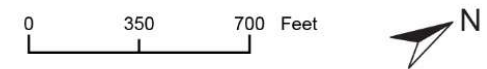


Alternative A3 Concept

- LEGEND:**
- 100-YEAR FLOOD PLAIN
 - EXISTING RIGHT-OF-WAY
 - PROPOSED CITY RIGHT-OF-WAY
 - PROPOSED STATE RIGHT-OF-WAY FOR STRUCTURE OPTION
 - PROPOSED STATE RIGHT-OF-WAY FOR FILL OPTION
 - PROPOSED RETAINING WALL
 - PROPOSED TOE OF SLOPE
 - ADJACENT IMPROVEMENTS (NOT PART OF THIS PROJECT)

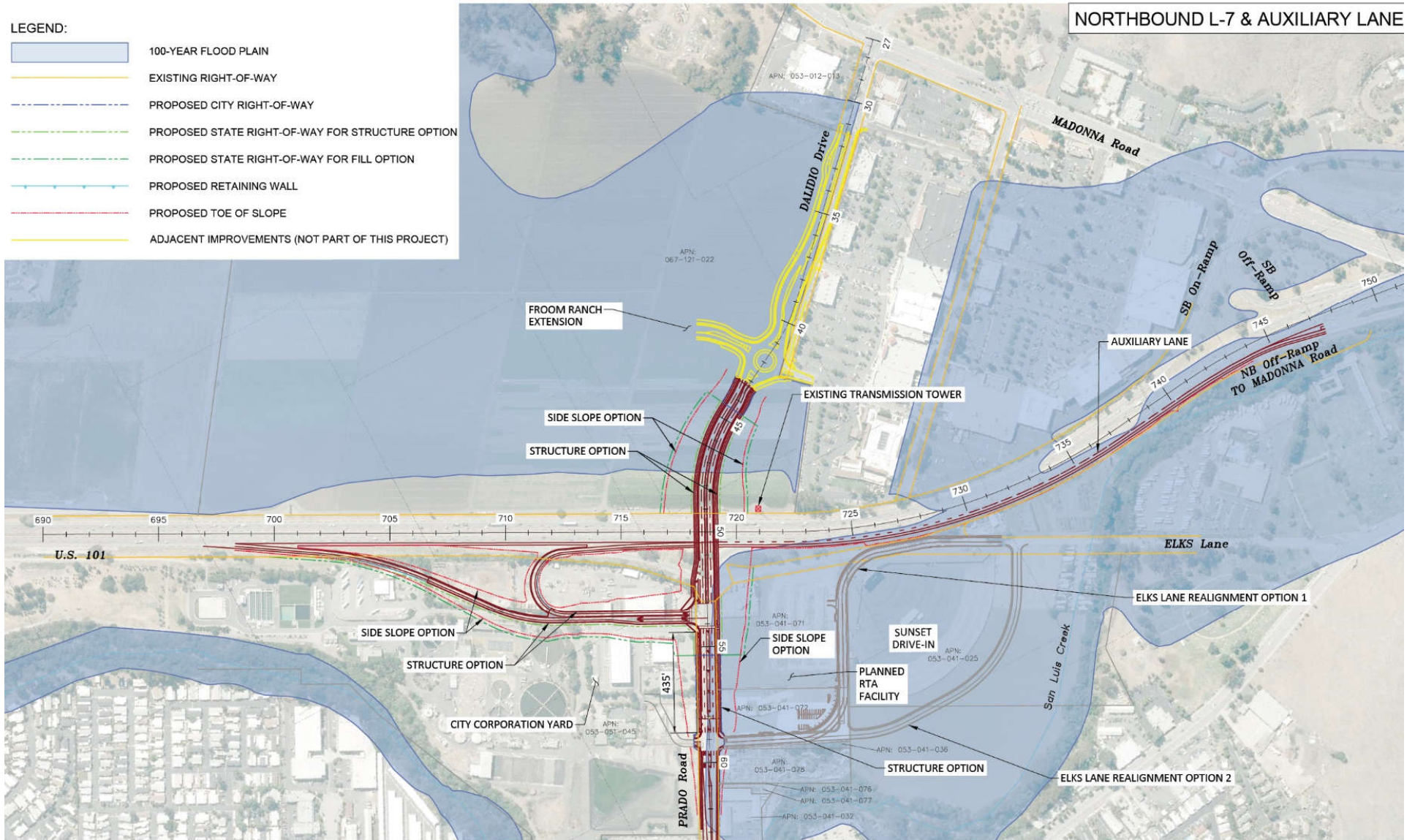


Source: GHD, 2021.



Alternative A4 Concept

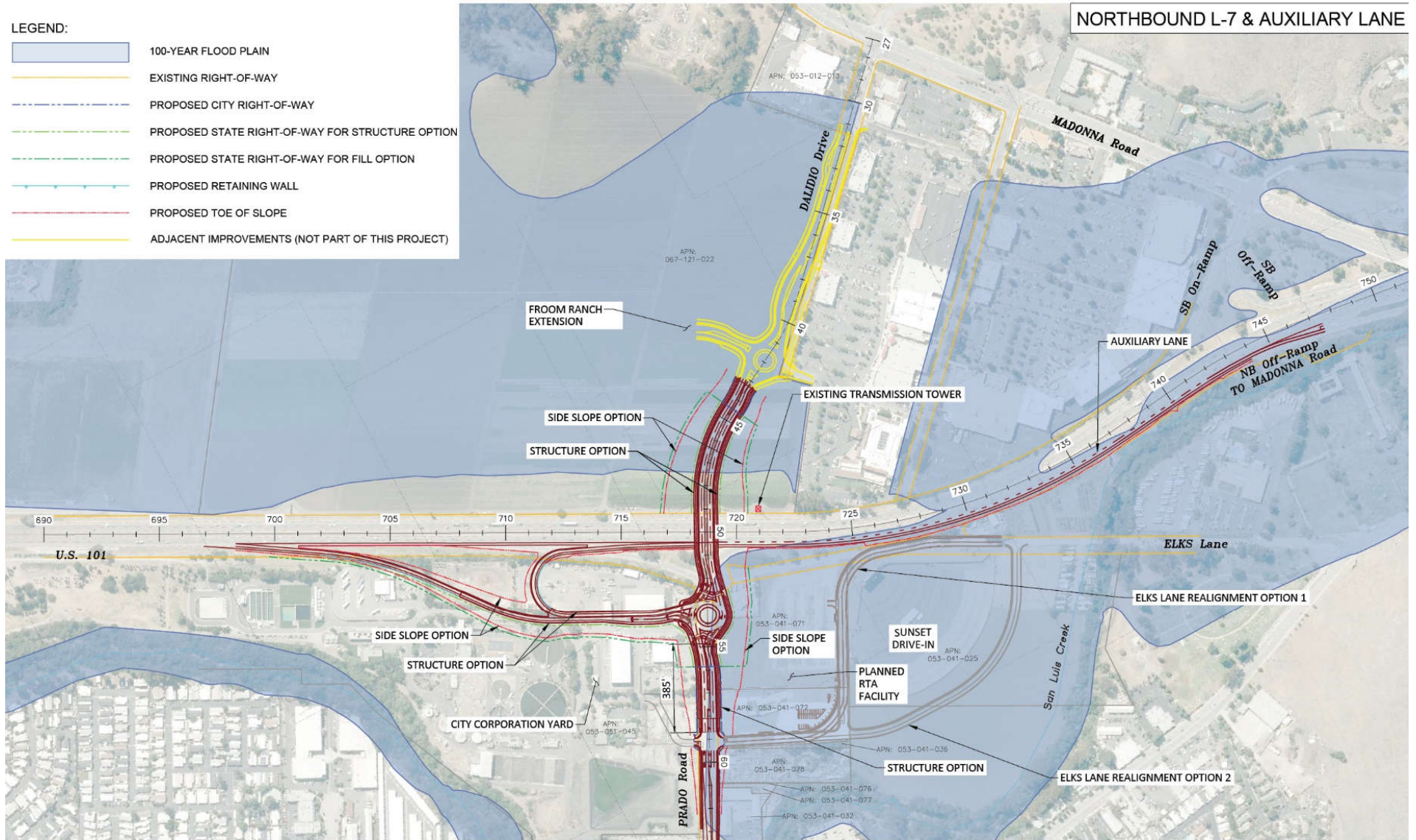
- LEGEND:**
- 100-YEAR FLOOD PLAIN
 - EXISTING RIGHT-OF-WAY
 - PROPOSED CITY RIGHT-OF-WAY
 - PROPOSED STATE RIGHT-OF-WAY FOR STRUCTURE OPTION
 - PROPOSED STATE RIGHT-OF-WAY FOR FILL OPTION
 - PROPOSED RETAINING WALL
 - PROPOSED TOE OF SLOPE
 - ADJACENT IMPROVEMENTS (NOT PART OF THIS PROJECT)



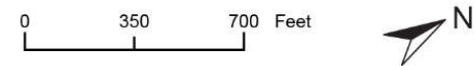
Source: GHD, 2021.

Alternative A4R Concept

- LEGEND:
- 100-YEAR FLOOD PLAIN
 - EXISTING RIGHT-OF-WAY
 - PROPOSED CITY RIGHT-OF-WAY
 - PROPOSED STATE RIGHT-OF-WAY FOR STRUCTURE OPTION
 - PROPOSED STATE RIGHT-OF-WAY FOR FILL OPTION
 - PROPOSED RETAINING WALL
 - PROPOSED TOE OF SLOPE
 - ADJACENT IMPROVEMENTS (NOT PART OF THIS PROJECT)



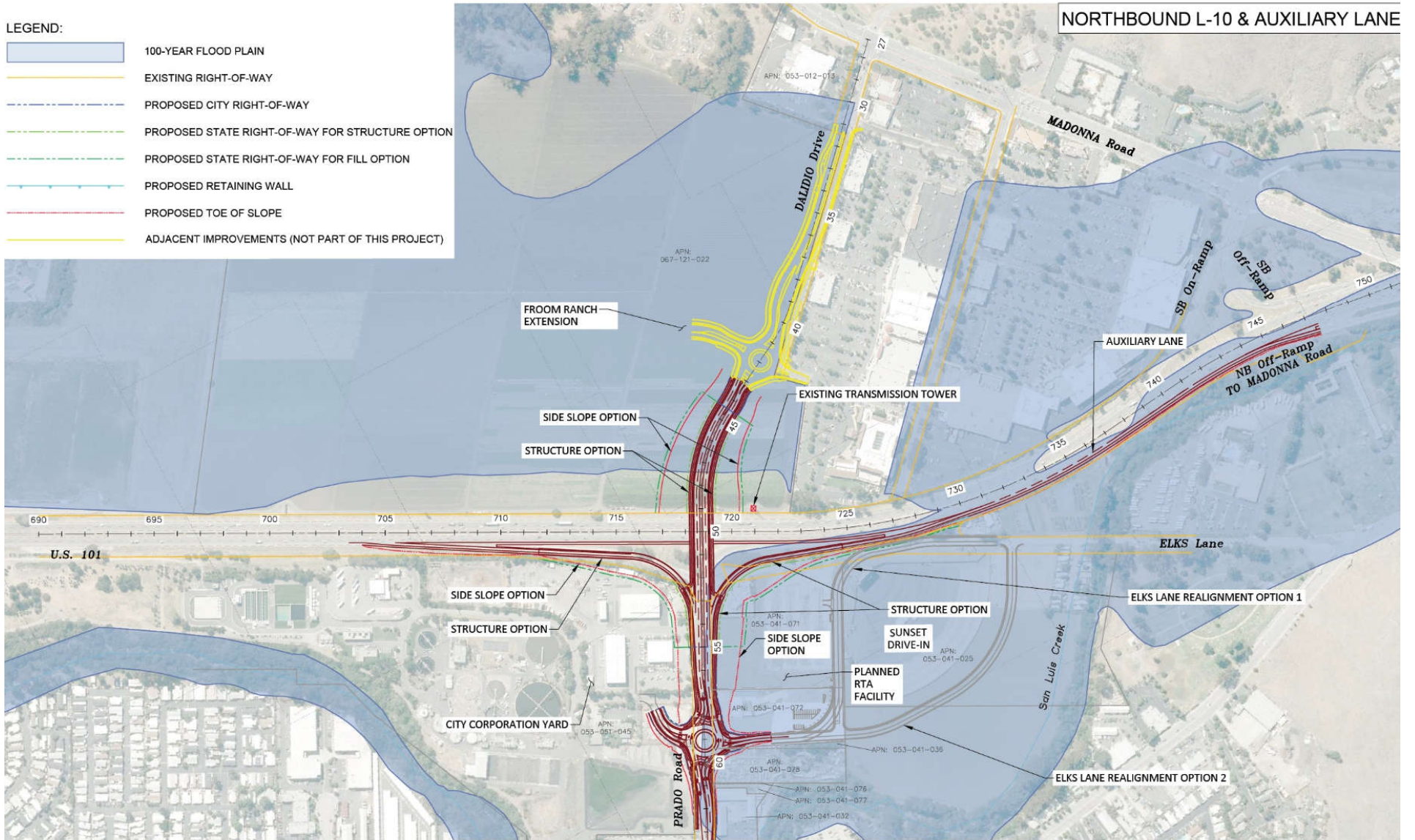
Source: GHD, 2021.



Alternative A7 Concept

LEGEND:

- 100-YEAR FLOOD PLAIN
- EXISTING RIGHT-OF-WAY
- PROPOSED CITY RIGHT-OF-WAY
- PROPOSED STATE RIGHT-OF-WAY FOR STRUCTURE OPTION
- PROPOSED STATE RIGHT-OF-WAY FOR FILL OPTION
- PROPOSED RETAINING WALL
- PROPOSED TOE OF SLOPE
- ADJACENT IMPROVEMENTS (NOT PART OF THIS PROJECT)



Source: GHD, 2021.

