

VOLUME I - FINAL ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT TEXT

PROPOSED CONSTRUCTION OF STATE ROUTE 73 EXTENSION
BETWEEN INTERSTATE ROUTE 5 IN THE CITY OF SAN JUAN CAPISTRANO
AND JAMBOREE ROAD IN THE CITY OF NEWPORT BEACH
KNOWN AS THE SAN JOAQUIN HILLS TRANSPORTATION CORRIDOR

AND I-5 WIDENING BETWEEN SR-74 ORTEGA HIGHWAY AND THE CORRIDOR
AND RAMP IMPROVEMENTS BETWEEN JAMBOREE ROAD AND BIRCH STREET
ON EXISTING STATE ROUTE 73
LOCATED IN ORANGE COUNTY, CALIFORNIA

FINAL ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT
AND
SECTION 4(F) EVALUATION

SUBMITTED PURSUANT TO:
(State) Division 13, Public Resources Code (Federal) 42 U.S.C. 4332 (2) (C), and 49 U.S.C. 303
BY THE
U.S. Department of Transportation
Federal Highway Administration
AND
San Joaquin Hills Transportation Corridor Agency
Orange County, California

COOPERATING AGENCIES:

Department of Transportation
Department of Interior, Fish and Wildlife Service

California Transportation Commission
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sed action is to meet the need for north/south linkage between Interstate 5 and existing State Route 73 by
ing a new highway facility which would be financed by tolls. Two design alternatives and a "No Build" alterna-
studied. The Preferred Alternative presented in this FEIS is the Demand Management Alternative with the Option
on Interstate 5. Potential benefits include relieving traffic congestion on Interstates 405 and 5, and State
moved transportation network, and improved access to U.C. Irvine, the John Wayne Airport, and recreational
Or. County. Potential adverse impacts include impacts on sensitive plant species; riparian and animal
public parkland; visual resources; noise; open space; displacement of businesses; and changes in land use.
s are proposed which reduce or avoid impacts. Under the No Build Alternative, no Corridor or associated
s would be built. The traffic relief benefits of the Build Alternative would not occur.

An expected near and long-term benefit of the Corridor is that it would either provide direct access or enhance access to the following recreational areas:

- Newport Beach Harbor and Beach Areas.
- Corona del Mar Beaches;
- 16,000 Acre Laguna Greenbelt Regional Open Space:
 - Crystal Cove State Park;
 - Buck Gully/Los Trancos Canyon Regional Open Space;
 - Laurel Canyon/Irvine Coast Wilderness Park;
 - Laguna Canyon Ridge Open Space;
 - Aliso Greenbelt at El Toro Road;
 - Aliso/Wood Canyon Regional Park;
- Laguna Beach Recreational Areas;
- Laguna Niguel Regional Park;
- Aliso Creek State Beach and Salt Creek County Beach; and
- Dana Point Harbor, Doheny State Park, Lantern Bay Regional Overlook.

With respect to potential overuse of coastal resources, the following information is provided. According to the Harbors, Beaches and Parks Department, the County of Orange has no predetermined carrying capacity for County owned recreational open space or regional parks. Park capacity, to a great extent, is dictated by the number of parking spaces available at each recreational facility, restricting access when available parking is fully engaged. Since many of the proposed County regional parks in the Corridor area have opened recently or are not yet open to public use, there are no current user statistics or estimates of carrying capacity. Orange County's current Regional Recreational Facilities Plan, updating the 1980 Recreational Needs Analysis, is based on recreation need, and reasonable expectations dictated by the County's financial capabilities. As indicated in the recreation element of the County General Plan, wilderness regional parks are designed to be regional parks in which the land retains its undeveloped character with minimal improvements, and which is managed and protected to preserve natural processes. The resource management and development policy for wilderness regional park areas permits only "restricted hardscape and domestication appropriate to provide access and enjoyment/observation of natural resources and processes." Interpretative programs and concessions are permitted. The County's recreational element does not contain regulations which specifically control the number of individuals permitted access to such park areas.

Many of the recreation areas discussed in the Final EIS, such as Aliso/Wood Canyon Regional Park, currently exist as passive recreational sites. It is expected that various levels of active recreation uses will be developed at these locations in the future, increasing both the demand for the sites and their planned carrying capacity. The proposed Corridor and feeder arterials would provide the additional travel capacity to serve the increased traffic demand.

In light of the policies enunciated in the California Coastal Act that encourage access to coastal recreational resources for inland residents as well as those living near the coast, restriction of access to coastal resources in

order to protect their environmental values is more properly accomplished through techniques limiting the use of each site, rather than restriction of regional transportation access to coastal recreation areas. Management techniques such as controlling the size and location of parking areas are both more effective and more equitable means of assuring proper use and availability of coastal recreation sites than attempting to constrain access artificially by limiting the capacity of roadways.

Overuse of coastal recreational resources is further regulated by state law. For example, areas subject to the California Coastal Act, including the coastal recreational sites seaward of the Corridor, must comply with the policies of the Coastal Act including Public Resources Code Section 30212.5 requiring distribution of public facilities in such a way as to avoid "overuse by the public of any single area" and Public Resources Code Sections 30240(a) and (b) protecting sensitive natural resources. Park management techniques for regulating public use of recreation areas are expected to be finalized during the review of park plans adopted for each recreation area. In addition, specific park development plans will be subject to the requirements of CEQA and to specific local coastal programs ("LCPs") approved by the Coastal Commission pursuant to the California Coastal Act. As described in the Final EIS and below, the Corridor is consistent with the approved LCPs for Aliso Creek, Irvine Coast, and the cities of Irvine and Newport Beach. Compliance with these regulations, in conjunction with the utilization of park management techniques, will provide an effective and equitable means of assuring proper use and availability of recreation areas.

The proposed Corridor would intersect, or be adjacent to three areas within the coastal zone boundary. These areas are as follows:

- Corridor would be adjacent to coastal zone boundary south of El Toro Road;
- Corridor would traverse the coastal zone adjacent to future Sand Canyon Avenue; and
- Corridor would traverse the coastal zone at San Diego Creek near the southeasterly end of Upper Newport Bay (see Figure 3.7.1).

These areas of the coastal zone fall under land use regulations contained in the Aliso Creek LCP and the Irvine Coast LCP or, in the case of the San Diego Creek crossing, are not within an adopted LCP. Each LCP includes an adopted Land Use Plan (LUP) which designates land uses within the Planning Unit. For purposes of this discussion, Corridor consistency with applicable LCPs is assessed against the relevant adopted LUP below. The relationship of the Corridor to the Irvine and Newport Beach LUPs is also described.

Aliso Creek LUP. The Aliso Creek LCP Land Use Plan (LUP) was certified by the California Coastal Commission on September 25, 1984.

The proposed Corridor would be adjacent to the Aliso Creek coastal zone boundary near the Aliso Creek Planning Unit. The Corridor would not intrude into the coastal zone (Source: Aliso Viejo Planned Community Development Plan, 3rd Revised Zone Change, 83-23P).

APPENDIX K - COASTAL ACT ISSUES AND CORRESPONDENCE

The Commission's January 21, 1992, letter to NOAA, included in Attachment 1 to this Appendix, indicates that Commission staff intends to recommend to the Coastal Commission that review of the coastal zone effects of this project will be undertaken through consistency review of Army Corps of Engineers permits.

In December 1991, the TCA prepared a "Detailed Analysis Relating EIR Discussion to Issues Raised in California Coastal Commission Letter Dated August 7, 1991," hereafter referred to as "Coastal Analysis". This report is included as Attachment E-1 to the TCA "Report Prepared in Response to Peremptory Writ of Mandate Dated November 18, 1991, Regarding the San Joaquin Hills Transportation Corridor," December 9, 1991. The Coastal Analysis utilized information in this Final EIS to address the Coastal Commission comments geographically and topically, because the EIS does not specifically differentiate between impacts within the coastal zone and potential impacts of development outside the coastal zone on natural resources located within the statutorily defined "coastal zone". For further information on the Corridor's relationship to coastal zone issues, the reader is referred to the Coastal Analysis.

As stated in Section 1.0 of the Final EIS, a secondary project objective is to provide access from inland areas to existing and planned coastal recreational areas.

SR-1 is a major arterial providing access to recreational uses in the coastal communities of Newport Beach, Laguna Beach, Dana Point and San Juan Capistrano. Traffic volumes on SR-1 would be substantially reduced by construction of the Corridor. Provision of the Corridor would provide relief to SR-1, and would facilitate recreational access by allowing non-recreational traffic to utilize a nearby regional parallel route to SR-1. It also permits recreational traffic to utilize a nearby regional parallel route to SR-1, and permits recreational traffic to minimize its use of SR-1 by facilitating access to the coastal recreational areas via other routes such as MacArthur, Pelican Hill, Laguna Canyon, Sand Canyon, Crown Valley Parkway, and Street of the Golden Lantern. Given the recreational needs of an expanding County population, the Corridor provides an essential link between inland residential areas and these major recreational areas of the coast.

The California Coastal Act of 1976 places a high priority on assuring public access to the Coast and on encouraging recreational use of Coastal areas (Public Resources Code Sections 30210-30214, 30220-30224, 30250(c) and 30254). By enhancing public access to important Coastal recreational areas (several of which were created as a result of Coastal Commission permit and LCP conditions, including the Irvine Coast Wilderness Park, the Aliso/Wood Canyons Regional Park, and the Lantern Bay Overlook), the Corridor helps attain these Coastal Act objectives. The Corridor enhances alternative access to Crystal Cove State Park and Laguna Beach via Pelican Hill Road and Sand Canyon Avenue, thereby freeing up capacity on MacArthur for access to the Corona del Mar and Irvine Coast beaches and Laguna Canyon Road for access to beaches in Laguna Beach, and the Laurel Canyon and Irvine Coast open space dedication areas. In the same fashion, the long-term County objectives of assuring major recreational use in the Laguna Greenbelt area are also enhanced, consistent with the County's General Plan land use designations for these areas.