

Memorandum

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To: KEVIN HOVEY, Chief
District 11 Environmental Analysis Branch D

Date: March 21, 2018

File: STPL-5169(049)
City of El Centro
Imperial Ave Extension

From: MICHELLE BLAKE
Associate Environmental Planner
District 11 Environmental Analysis Branch D

Subject: **SCOPE DECREASE FOR THE IMPERIAL AVENUE EXTENSION PROJECT IN THE CITY OF EL CENTRO**

The City of El Centro has down-scoped the proposed Imperial Avenue Extension project from the original scope of work analyzed in the Visual Impact Analysis memo. The City now proposes to build four through traffic travel lanes with curb/cutter/sidewalk on both sides of Imperial Avenue between Wake Avenue and Interstate 8, and build a two-lane facility from Wake Avenue to McCabe Road. The two-lane facility south of Wake Avenue will be constructed on the east half of the ultimate ROW, and only the east half of ROW will be purchased at this time. This would result in curb/gutter/sidewalk only on the east side of the new two-lane road. The modified scope reduces impacts to agricultural fields located on the west side of the project site. The reduction in the project scope does not affect the original findings and conclusions in the Visual Impact Analysis memo.



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Ms. Michelle Blake
Caltrans District 11 Environmental
4050 Taylor Street
San Diego, CA 92110

Reference: Imperial Avenue Extension Project Visual Impact Assessment Memorandum
(RECON Number 7972)

The Imperial Avenue Extension Project (project) would extend Imperial Avenue from Interstate 8 (I-8) to McCabe Road in the southern portion of the City of El Centro, Imperial County, California. The proposed one-mile roadway extension would have a 110-foot right-of-way to accommodate a 4-lane roadway with a 14-foot median, a 5.5-foot sidewalk, and 6.5-foot native shoulder backing on both sides. It is anticipated the project would be phased, and preliminary phasing consists of the following:

- Phase I: I-8 to Wake Avenue
- Phase II: Wake Avenue to Danenberg Drive
- Phase III: Danenberg Drive to Valleyview Avenue
- Phase IV: Valleyview Avenue to McCabe Road

The project would also construct a 2-lane roadway segment to connect the separated portions of Wake Avenue located west and east of the project site. Similarly, the project would construct a 2-lane roadway segment to connect to the portion of Danenberg Drive located east of the project site. The sidewalk and native shoulder backing on the southbound side of the proposed roadway corridor would cover the existing Date Drain that runs parallel along the entire western edge of the project site. The covered Date Drain would continue to convey water beneath the project improvements.

The 37.82-acre project site is located south of I-8 and north of McCabe Road. The alignment of the proposed roadway extension follows the same linear pathway as the existing portion of Imperial Avenue north of I-8. The project site is relatively flat, and consists primarily of a narrow north-south corridor of vacant land with sparse vegetation. A small portion of land within the southernmost segment of this corridor along the eastern project boundary is currently in agricultural production. The project site also includes a paved segment of Wake Avenue and vacant land with sparse vegetation that would be developed for extensions of Wake Avenue and Danenberg Drive. No substantial scenic resources, such as trees or rock outcroppings, are located on-site.

The project site is surrounded by existing residential development, active farmland, and agricultural drains. Existing residential development is located northwest of the future intersection of Imperial Avenue and Wake Avenue. All other land west of the project site south of the future intersection of Imperial Avenue and Wake Avenue to the southern project terminus at McCabe Road consists of active farmland. The Date Drain, which consists of an earthen agricultural drain, runs parallel along the entire western edge of the proposed Imperial Avenue extension. Existing residential development is located east of the project site from the northern terminus at I-8 to Danenberg Drive. An abandoned park and an active water treatment plant are located east of the project south of the future intersection with Danenberg Drive, followed by additional existing residential development along the eastern project boundary south to Valleyview Avenue. Land east of the project site from Valleyview Avenue to the southern terminus consists of active farmland. The Dahlia Lateral, which consists of a concrete lined agricultural drain, runs parallel along the eastern edge of the

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proposed Imperial Avenue extension from Danenberg Drive to McCabe Road. Land north of the project site consists of an elevated roadway berm supporting I-8, while land to the south consists of active farmland.

The existing vacant and disturbed character of the majority of the project site is unremarkable and does not possess a strong scenic quality. Similarly, the small portion of the project site in agricultural production and the paved segment of Wake Avenue do not possess strong scenic qualities. Views from most locations within the project site are blocked by existing residential development and the elevated roadway berm supporting I-8. Unobstructed views from the project site face agricultural fields, undeveloped land, and rural residential development that do not qualify as scenic vistas. Therefore, the project would not have substantial effects on a scenic resource or a scenic vista.

The visual character of the project would be compatible with the existing visual character of the project site, which consists primarily of an unofficial north-south dirt road surrounded by residential development, active farmland, and agricultural drains. Although the project would slightly increase the urban character of the project site and surrounding area, viewer response from surrounding properties would be low because the proposed roadway extension would follow the alignment of the existing unofficial north-south dirt road and would not change the surrounding land use pattern. Similarly, viewer response to the slight increase in urban character would also be low due to the presence of existing residential development and other roadways in the immediate area. The project would not introduce new structures with heights that would block views or otherwise substantially change the scenic character of the area. Viewer response to covering the Date Drain running parallel along the project's western boundary would be low because the earthen channel does not possess strong scenic quality.

Light and glare generated by the project would be consistent with other 4-lane roadways throughout the City. Street lighting for the project would comply with the City illumination requirements to shield lighting in a manner that would prevent spillover from impacting adjacent residential development. Additionally, project curb and gutters, sidewalks, and native shoulder backing would provide adequate distance to prevent car headlights from impacting adjacent residential development. Therefore, viewer response to light and glare from properties surrounding the project would be low.

Viewer response for travelers on I-8 would also be low. As described above, the project would be compatible with the existing visual character of the proposed roadway extension corridor. Additionally, views for travelers on I-8 would not be directly focused on the project site and would be short in duration. The segment of I-8 north of the project site is not designated, or considered eligible to be designated, as a state scenic highway. Therefore, there could not be an impact to a designated, or eligible to be designated, scenic highway. Overall, viewer response to the change in scenic quality from properties surrounding the project site and travelers on I-8 would be low.

Sincerely,



Nick Larkin
Associate Environmental Analyst

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