Draft

INITIAL STUDY/MITIGATED NEGATIVE DECLARATION
US-95 AT HAVASU LAKE ROAD IMPROVEMENT PROJECT
SAN BERNARDINO COUNTY, CALIFORNIA

Prepared for:

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Page

SECTION 1.0 – PROJECT DESCRIPTION AND ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING 5
1.1 PROJECT PURPOSE 5
1.2 PROJECT BACKGROUND 5
1.3 PROJECT LOCATION AND SITE CHARACTERISTICS 5
1.3.1 Location 5
1.3.2 General Plan Designation/Zoning 5
1.3.3 Surrounding Land Uses and Project Setting 5
1.4 PROJECT DESCRIPTION 6
1.4.1 Construction 6
1.5 SUMMARY OF MITIGATION MEASURES 7
1.6 REQUIRED PERMITS AND APPROVALS 11
1.6.1 Lead Agency Approval 11
1.6.2 Reviewing Agencies 11
1.6.3 Documents Incorporated by Reference 11

SECTION 2.0 – ENVIRONMENTAL DETERMINATION 12
2.1 ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS POTENTIALLY AFFECTED: 12
2.2 DETERMINATION 12

SECTION 3.0 – EVALUATION OF ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS 13

SECTION 4.0 – CHECKLIST OF ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES 14
4.1 AESTHETICS 14
4.1.1 Environmental Setting 14
4.1.2 Impact Analysis 16
4.2 AGRICULTURE & FORESTRY RESOURCES 17
4.2.1 Environmental Setting 18
4.2.2 Impact Analysis 20
4.3 AIR QUALITY 21
4.3.1 Environmental Setting 21
4.3.2 Impact Analysis 22
4.4 BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES 26
4.4.1 Environmental Setting 26
4.4.2 Impact Analysis 27
4.5 CULTURAL RESOURCES 30
4.5.1 Environmental Setting 31
4.5.2 Impact Analysis 33
4.6 ENERGY 34
4.6.1 Environmental Setting 35

4.6.2 Impact Analysis 36
4.7 GEOLOGY AND SOILS 36
4.7.1 Environmental Setting 37
4.7.2 Impact Analysis 40
4.8 GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS 43
4.8.1 Environmental Setting 43
4.8.2 Impact Analysis 43
4.9 HAZARDS AND HAZARDOUS MATERIALS 44
4.9.1 Environmental Setting 45
4.9.2 Impact Analysis 47
4.10 HYDROLOGY AND WATER QUALITY 49
4.10.1 Environmental Setting 50
4.10.2 Impact Analysis 51
4.11 LAND USE AND PLANNING 55
4.11.1 Environmental Setting 55
4.11.2 Impact Analysis 56
4.12 MINERAL RESOURCES 57
4.12.1 Environmental Setting 57
4.12.2 Impact Analysis 60
4.13 NOISE 60
4.13.1 Environmental Setting 60
4.13.2 Impact Analysis 63
4.14 POPULATION AND HOUSING 64
4.14.1 Environmental Setting 64
4.14.2 Impact Analysis 66
4.15 PUBLIC SERVICES 66
4.15.1 Environmental Setting 67
4.15.2 Impact Analysis 68
4.16 RECREATION 69
4.16.1 Environmental Setting 69
4.16.2 Impact Analysis 70
4.17 TRANSPORTATION 70
4.17.1 Environmental Setting 71
4.17.2 Impact Analysis 72
4.18 TRIBAL CULTURAL RESOURCES 74
4.18.1 Environmental Setting 74
4.18.2 Impact Analysis 76
4.19 UTILITIES AND SERVICE SYSTEMS 77
4.19.1 Environmental Setting 77
4.19.2 Impact Analysis 80
4.20 WILDFIRE 81

4.20.1 Environmental Setting 82
4.20.2 Impact Analysis 83
4.21 MANDATORY FINDINGS OF SIGNIFICANCE 85
4.21.1 Impact Analysis 85

SECTION 5.0 – REFERENCES 87

APPENDIX A – AIR QUALITY AND GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS TECHNICAL MEMORANDUM
APPENDIX B – BIOLOGICAL RECONNAISSANCE ASSESSMENT REPORT
APPENDIX C – ARCHAEOLOGICAL SURVEY and REPORT

LIST OF TABLES

Page

Table 3-1. MDAQMD Significant Emissions Thresholds 22
Table 3-2. Construction-Related Criteria Pollutant Emissions 25
Table 3-3. Project Related Greenhouse Gas Annual Emissions 44
Table 3-4. Noise Standards for Stationary Noise Sources 61
Table 3-5. Noise Standards for Adjacent Mobile Noise Sources 61

LIST OF FIGURES

Page

Figure 1 - Project Vicinity and Location Map 9
Figure 2 – Project Site Plan 10

SECTION 1.0 – PROJECT DESCRIPTION AND ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

1.1 PROJECT PURPOSE

The purpose of the US-95 at Havasu Lake Road Improvement Project (Project) is to improve traffic flow, enhance safety, and meet increasing capacity demands along the US-95 Highway at the intersection with Havasu Lake Road. This will consist of widening a portion of the road and constructing a left-turn pocket in Needles, San Bernardino County.

1.2 PROJECT BACKGROUND

The California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) is proposing to expand the right-of-way onto a portion of property under the ownership of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM). The Project is located on Assessor's Parcel Number (APN) 065-123-114. The Project site is located along the US-95, at the intersection of Havasu Lake Road and the US-95 near the City of Needles, San Bernardino County, as illustrated on Figure 1. The GPS coordinates of the Project site are 34°33'28.43"N, 114°38'42.62"W.

The scope of the Proposed Project includes widening US Highway 95 by 14 feet (12-foot lane and 2-foot edge line) and constructing a left-turn pocket with a maximum excavation depth of 1.10 feet. Approximately 3000 linear feet of brush will be removed to accommodate the widening. Additionally, California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) would acquire approximately 3000 linear feet by four feet of Bureau of Land Management (BLM) right-of-way for the Proposed Project. BLM will cover the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) scope of work and the County of San Bernardino Department of Public Works, Environmental Management Division (County), will cover the CEQA scope of work. All NEPA analysis will be included in a separate environmental document by a separate entity.

1.3 PROJECT LOCATION AND SITE CHARACTERISTICS

1.3.1 Location

The Project site is located along the US Highway 95 southbound intersection at Havasu Lake Road in unincorporated Needles, San Bernardino County, CA 92363. The GPS coordinates of the Project site are 34°33'28.43"N, 114°38'42.62"W. The Project footprint and location are presented in Figure 1.

1.3.2 General Plan Designation/Zoning

The Proposed Project is located within the southern portion of the City of Needle's unincorporated Sphere of Influence (SOI) within the County of San Bernardino. The entire intersection is zoned as Resource Conservation (RC). Adjacent parcels of the Project site are also zoned as RC.

1.3.3 Surrounding Land Uses and Project Setting

The Project vicinity is predominantly open desert terrain, with land designated under RC zoning. The area is unincorporated and undeveloped land. The Project site is located along the US-95, a significant north-south transportation route along California's eastern border. Surrounding wilderness around the Project site includes the Chemehuevi Mountains Wilderness to the east, Stepladder Mountains Wilderness to the west, the Sacramento Mountains to the northwest, and the Whipple Mountains Wilderness Area to the

south. The City of Needles is located approximately 20 miles north of the Project Site. Lake Havasu City is located approximately 17 east of the Project site, across the California-Arizona state border.

1.4 PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The Project would include the demolition of existing asphalt concrete, mill and overlay of existing concrete, and additional asphalt concrete pavement on the expanded road portions. The existing southbound lane along the US-95 would be expanded 14 feet west into the expansion area. A 12-foot-wide expanded lane with a 2-foot shoulder would include a left-turn pocket on southbound US-95, allowing safe turns onto Lake Havasu Road while minimizing idling of through traffic.

All vegetation within the planned expansion area will be removed. A two-direction large arrow sign (type W1-7 road sign), located at the Project site intersection, will be relocated. No utilities will be impacted by the Proposed Project.

1.4.1 Construction

During construction, there would be no road closures. Drivers would be able to utilize the existing lanes to move through the US-95 and Lake Havasu Road. Traffic control would occur on both Lake Havasu Road and the US-95 segment. The Traffic Control plan will identify alternative routes during construction to effectively and safely move drivers through the Project site. The Traffic Control plan will be designed in accordance with the California Manual on Traffic Control Devices, Standard Specifications for Public Works Construction "Greenbook," and the County of San Bernardino Standards. Furthermore, the Traffic Control Plan shall be subject to review and approval by the San Bernardino County Department of Public Works. General Construction Best Management Practices (BMP) will be used for stormwater protection.

Staging Areas

The proposed staging area is a 1-acre flat, previously disturbed dirt lot located directly east of the southbound lane of US-95, adjacent to the intersection of US-95 and Lake Havasu Road. Aerial imagery from Google Earth indicates there's minimal vegetation cover and evidence of vehicle use, including visible tire marks and occasional parked vehicles, suggesting the area is actively used as an informal pullout area for vehicles. Its location provides convenient and direct access from the highway, making it suitable for staging construction equipment and materials with minimal additional site preparation.

Equipment and Workers

Construction activities occurring on the Project site would include minor grading and shoulder backing at the edge of the pavement. No additional import or export of soil would occur. Existing surficial soils would be recompacted to provide a uniform surface for the roadway. Dust suppression methods would be implemented during construction in compliance with Mojave Desert Air Quality Management District (MDAQMD) Rule 403.2. In addition to contractor vehicles, heavy equipment would be used on-site, including excavators, backhoes, bulldozers, bobcats, compactors, and dump trucks. There would be approximately 25 workers on-site during construction.

Schedule and Work Hours

The construction schedule is from Fall 2025 to Summer 2026. The construction work hours would be in accordance with the County of San Bernardino permitted hours for construction noise from 7:00 a.m. and

7:00 p.m. Construction activities will not occur on weekends or Federal holidays in accordance with the County's Noise Ordinance.

1.5 SUMMARY OF MITIGATION MEASURES

The following mitigation measures have been identified to reduce Project impacts to less than significant levels, as discussed in Section 3.0.

MM BIO-1: Per the Biological Reconnaissance Assessment, the Project site has low potential to have a special status wildlife species, desert tortoise (*Gopherus agassizii*), to be present on-site. Because the Project site is located within USFWS designated critical habitat, a pre-construction survey for desert tortoise shall be done prior to initiating ground disturbance to ensure no desert tortoise migrating through the area are present on site. If a tortoise or an active burrow is observed no work shall occur within 500 feet of the burrow and a qualified biological monitor shall be present throughout construction activities.

MM BIO-2 To minimize potential impacts to nesting birds protected under the MBTA within the Project, construction activities shall take place outside nesting season (February 1 to August 31) to the greatest extent practicable. The survey shall be scheduled with and conducted by a qualified biologist in coordination with the County and on-site construction manager.

If construction activities must occur during nesting season, a preconstruction nesting bird survey shall be conducted prior to initiation of ground-disturbing activities. The survey shall be completed within 14 days prior to ground disturbing activities, which consist of, but are not limited to, tree removal, trenching, etc.

During the survey, should nesting birds or their nests be encountered, to the maximum extent practicable, a minimum buffer zone around occupied nests should be determined by a qualified biologist to avoid impacts to the active nest. The buffer shall range at a minimum of 100 to 300 feet. The buffer should be maintained during physical ground-disturbing activities. Avoidance measures that shall be implemented if the biologist finds that it is required to not impact the nests include but are not limited to noise, activity, and design modifications, worker education, signage, buffers and/or temporary fencing. Once the biologist has determined that the nesting has ceased and the nestlings have fledged, the buffer may be removed.

MM CUL-1 If cultural resources are encountered during ground-disturbing activities, work in the immediate area must halt and an archaeologist meeting the Secretary of the Interior's (SOI) Professional Qualifications Standards for archaeology will be contacted immediately to evaluate the find. Ground-disturbing activities will not resume until all the stipulations of the Code of Regulations (CFR) Title 36 Part 800.13(b) and (c) are satisfied and the Lead Agency has authorized a continuance. If the discovery proves to be significant under CEQA or the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA), additional work such as data recovery excavation and Native American consultation may be necessary to mitigate any significant impacts.

MM CUL-2 The County shall retain an SOI-Qualified Archaeologist to remain on-call for the duration of the Project's ground-disturbing construction activity to ensure the expedient response and assessment to inadvertent findings of cultural resources during construction.

MM CUL-3 In the event that human remains are discovered during ground-disturbing activities, then the Project would be subject to California Health and Safety Code 7050.5, CEQA Section 15064.5, and California Public Resources Code (PRC) Section 5097.98. If human remains are found during ground-disturbing activities, State of California Health and Safety Code Section 7050.5 states that no further disturbance shall occur until the County Medical Examiner-Coroner has made a determination of origin and disposition pursuant to PRC Section 5097.98. In the event of an unanticipated discovery of human remains, the County Medical Examiner-Coroner shall be notified immediately. If the human remains are determined to be of Native American ancestry, the Medical Examiner-Coroner shall notify the NAHC, which shall notify a most likely descendant (MLD). The MLD shall complete the inspection of the site within 48 hours of notification and may recommend scientific removal and nondestructive analysis of human remains and items associated with Native American burials (NPS 1983).

Figure 1 - Project Vicinity and Location Map

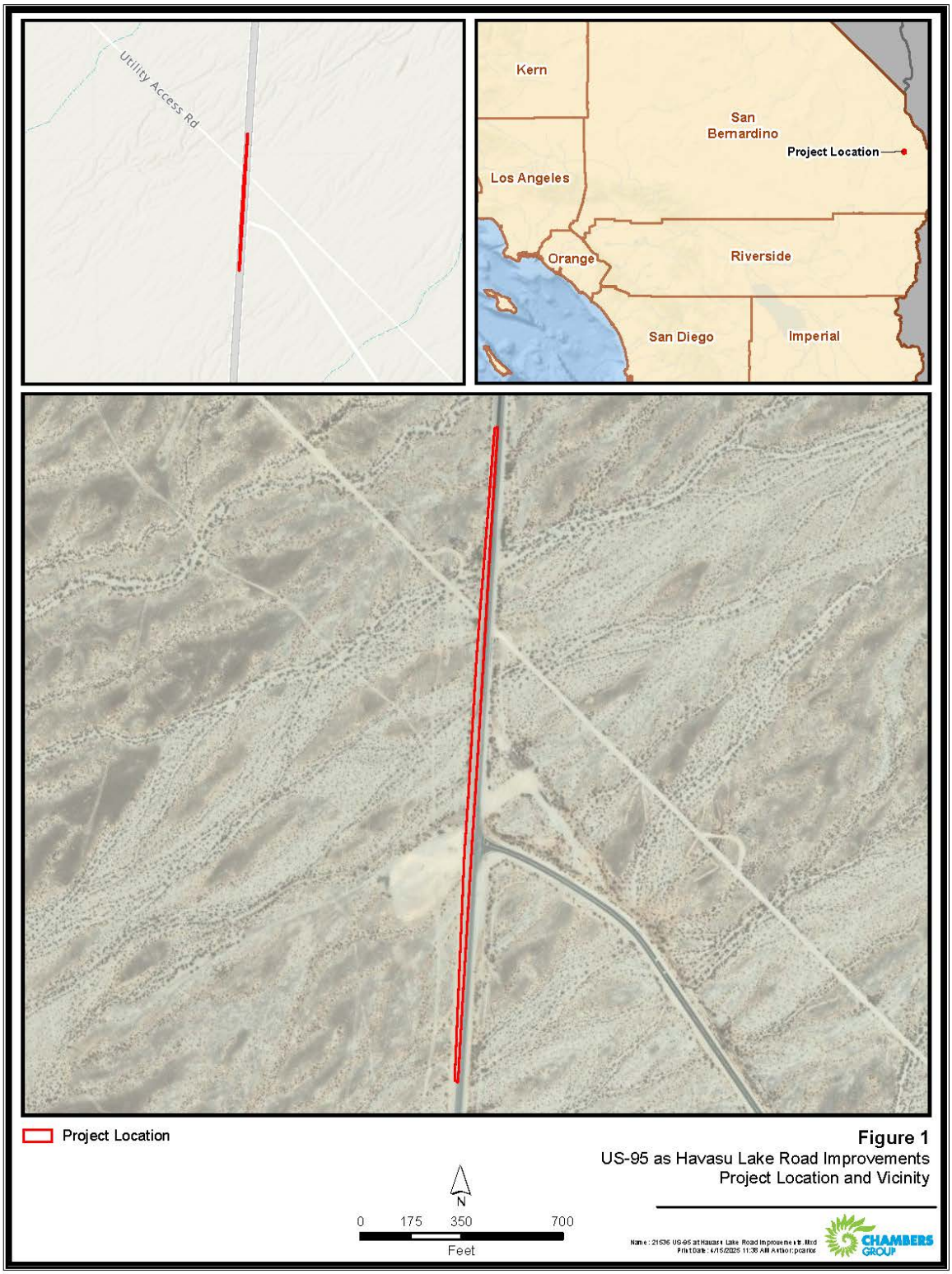

Figure 2 – Project Site Plan

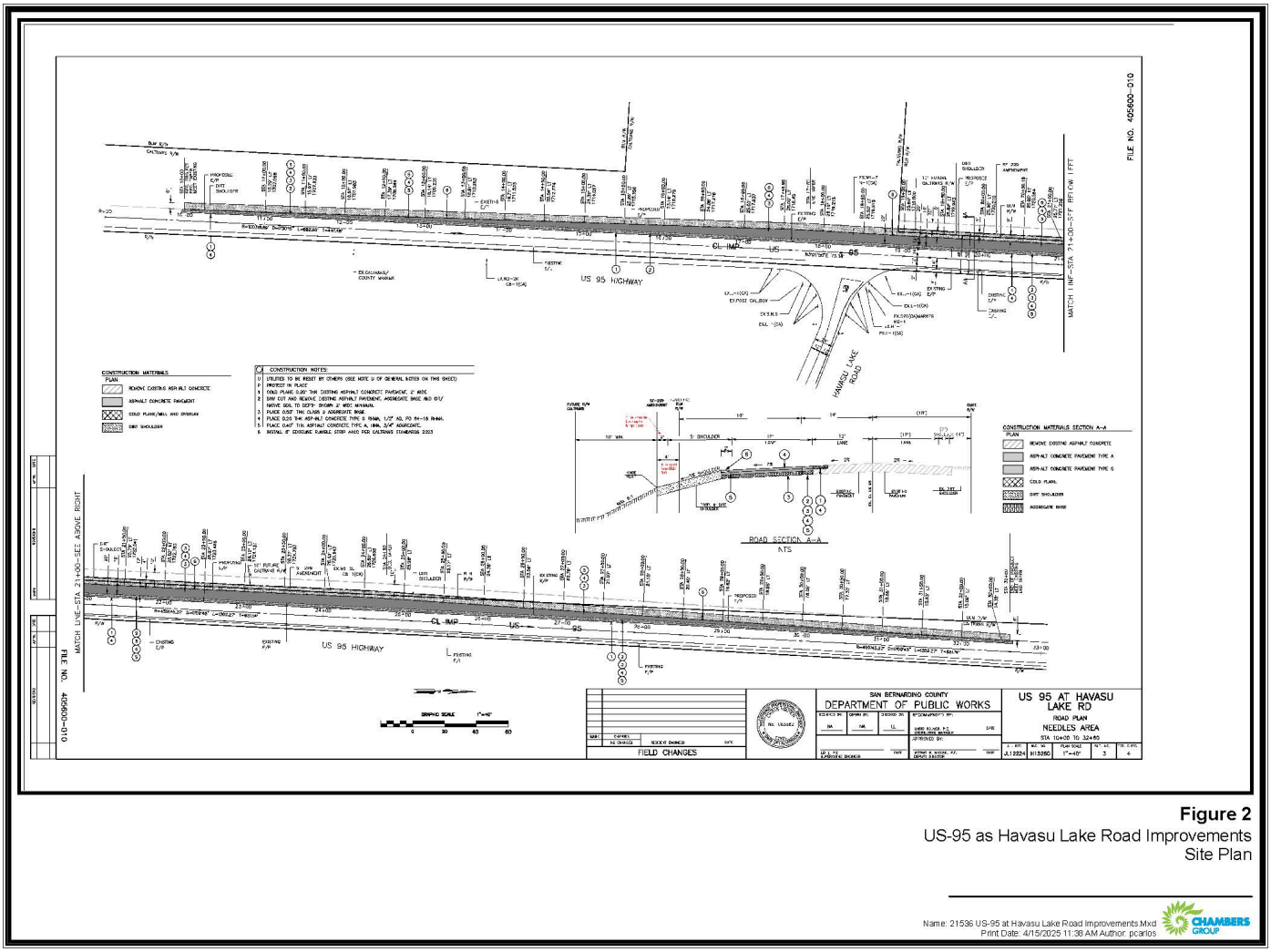

Figure 2
US-95 as Havasu Lake Road Improvements
Site Plan

Name: 21536 US-95 at Havasu Lake Road Improvements.Mxd
Print Date: 4/15/2025 11:38 AM Author: pcarlos

1.6 REQUIRED PERMITS AND APPROVALS

This section provides, to the extent the information is known to the County, a list of permits and approvals to implement the Project and a list of agencies that are associated with review of Project plans.

1.6.1 Lead Agency Approval

The following lists Lead Agency entitlements and permits that may be required for the Project prior to construction and operation:

- Encroachment Permit from Caltrans

As described throughout Section 3 of this IS/MND, the Project does not include any environmental conditions that would require a permit from a regulatory agency.

1.6.2 Reviewing Agencies

Reviewing Agencies include those agencies that do not have discretionary powers but that may review Project plans for adequacy and accuracy.

State Agencies

- California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) District 8

1.6.3 Documents Incorporated by Reference

The Countywide General Plan EIR (County 2019) is incorporated by reference into this initial study. The document can be found at https://countywideplan.com/resources/document-download/.

SECTION 2.0 – ENVIRONMENTAL DETERMINATION

2.1 ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS POTENTIALLY AFFECTED:

The environmental factors checked below would potentially be affected by this project, involving at least one impact that is a "Potentially Significant Impact," as indicated by the checklists on the following pages. For each of the potentially affected factors, mitigation measures are recommended that would reduce the impacts to less than significant levels.

☐ *Aesthetics*	☐ *Agriculture and Forestry Resources*	☐ *Air Quality*
☒ *Biological Resources*	☒ *Cultural Resources*	☐ *Energy*
☐ *Geology /Soils*	☐ *Greenhouse Gas Emissions*	☐ *Hazards & Hazardous Materials*
☐ *Hydrology /Water Quality*	☐ *Land Use / Planning*	☐ *Mineral Resources*
☐ *Noise*	☐ *Population / Housing*	☐ *Public Services*
☐ *Recreation*	☐ *Transportation*	☐ *Tribal Cultural Resources*
☐ *Utilities /Service Systems*	☐ *Wildfire*	☒ *Mandatory Findings of Significance*

2.2 DETERMINATION

On the basis of this initial evaluation:

1. I find that the project **could not** have a significant effect on the environment, and a **NEGATIVE DECLARATION** will be prepared. ☐
2. I find that although the proposed project could have a significant effect on the environment, there will not be a significant effect in this case because revisions in the project have been made by or agreed to by the project proponent. A **MITIGATED NEGATIVE DECLARATION** will be prepared. ☒
3. I find the proposed project **may have a significant effect** on the environment, and an **ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT** is required. ☐
4. I find that the proposed project **may have a "potentially significant impact" or "potentially significant unless mitigated impact"** on the environment, but at least one effect (1) has been adequately analyzed in an earlier document pursuant to applicable legal standards, and (2) has been addressed by mitigation measures based on the earlier analysis as described on attached sheets. An **ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT** is required, but it must analyze only the effects that remain to be addressed. ☐
5. I find that although the proposed project could have a significant effect on the environment, because all potentially significant effects (a) have been analyzed adequately in an earlier EIR or Negative Declaration pursuant to applicable standards, and (b) have been avoided or mitigated pursuant to that earlier EIR or Negative Declaration, including revisions or mitigation measures that are imposed upon the proposed project, nothing further is required. ☐

Ayida Smith
Signature Ayida Smith

07/18/2025
Date

SECTION 3.0 – EVALUATION OF ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

1. A brief explanation is required for all answers except "No Impact" answers that are adequately supported by the information sources a lead agency cites. A "No Impact" answer is adequately supported if the referenced information sources show that the impact simply does not apply to projects like the one involved (e.g., the project falls outside a fault rupture zone). A "No Impact" answer should be explained where it is based on project-specific factors as well as general standards (e.g., the project will not expose sensitive receptors to pollutants, based on a project-specific screening analysis).
2. All answers must take account of the whole action involved, including off-site as well as on-site, cumulative as well as project-level, indirect as well as direct, and construction as well as operational impacts.
3. Once the lead agency has determined that a particular physical impact may occur, then the checklist answers must indicate whether the impact is potentially significant, less than significant with mitigation, or less than significant. "Potentially Significant Impact" is appropriate if substantial evidence exists that an effect may be significant. If one or more "Potentially Significant Impact" entries are marked when the determination is made, an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) is required.
4. "Negative Declaration: Less Than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated" applies where the incorporation of mitigation measures has reduced an effect from "Potentially Significant Impact" to a "Less Than Significant Impact." The lead agency must describe the mitigation measures and briefly explain how they reduce the effect to a less than significant level (mitigation measures from earlier analyses may be cross-referenced).
5. Earlier analyses may be used where, pursuant to the tiering, program EIR, or other California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) process, an effect has been adequately analyzed in an earlier EIR or negative declaration. Section 15063(c)(3)(D). In this case, a brief discussion should identify the following:
    a. Earlier Analysis Used. Identify and state where they are available for review.
    b. Impacts Adequately Addressed. Identify which effects from the above checklist were within the scope of and adequately analyzed in an earlier document pursuant to applicable legal standards, and state whether such effects were addressed by mitigation measures based on the earlier analysis.
    c. Mitigation Measures. For effects that are "Less than Significant with Mitigation Measures Incorporated," describe the mitigation measures which were incorporated or refined from the earlier document and the extent to which they address site-specific conditions for the project.
6. Lead agencies are encouraged to incorporate into the checklist references to information sources for potential impacts (e.g., general plans, zoning ordinances). Reference to a previously prepared or outside document should, where appropriate, include a reference to the page or pages where the statement is substantiated.
7. Supporting Information Sources: A source list should be attached, and other sources used or individuals contacted should be cited in the discussion.
8. The explanation of each issue should identify:
    a. The significance criteria or threshold, if any, used to evaluate each question; and
    b. The mitigation measure identified, if any, to reduce the impact to less than significant.

SECTION 4.0 – CHECKLIST OF ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

4.1 AESTHETICS

1.	AESTHETICS. Except as provided in Public Resources Code Section 21099, would the project:	Potentially Significant Impact	Less than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
(a)	Have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista?	☐	☐	☒	☐
(b)	Substantially damage scenic resources, including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a state scenic highway?	☐	☐	☒	☐
(c)	Substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of public views of the site and its surroundings? (Public views are those that are experienced from publicly accessible vantage point). If the project is in an urbanized area, would the project conflict with applicable zoning and other regulations governing scenic quality?	☐	☐	☒	☐
(d)	Create a new source of substantial light or glare which would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area?	☐	☐	☒	☐

4.1.1 Environmental Setting

The County of San Bernardino Countywide Plan provides policies that serve to meet the County's comprehensive long-term goals for the future. The Natural Resources Element of the Countywide Plan provides goals and guidance for the protection of natural resources including the visual resources associated with natural and open space areas. San Bernardino County (County) is the largest County in the continental United States with a land area of 20,106 square miles. The County includes three distinct geographic regions, the Mountain Region, the Valley Region, and the Desert Region. The Project Site is in the North Desert Region of the County.

The North and East Desert Regions are bounded to the south primarily by the San Bernardino and San Gabriel Mountain ranges. The foothills on the northern side of the mountain ranges level off abruptly, with the southern part of the desert lying primarily flat with elevations hovering around 1,000 feet above mean sea level (amsl) and scattered low-elevation mountains ranging between 2,000 and 4,000 feet amsl. The North and East Desert Regions are primarily characterized by shorter remote mountain ranges surrounded by desert plains, with extensive open space and expansive vistas. These mountain ranges often have associated alluvial fans. Other significant landforms include playas, basin, plateaus, and dunes. Many of these features (alluvial fans, basins, playas, and slope debris in the form of rockslides and rock falls) result from the erosive power of running water; however, significant surface flow is both unpredictable and scarce in the arid desert environment. The Mojave Desert covers a large portion of the County in the central, northern, and eastern portions of the County. The Mojave River is perhaps the most prominent feature in the North and East Desert Regions and supports extensive riparian, wetland, and wind-blown sands habitat. Major plant communities in the regions include desert bedrock cliff, woodlands, dunes, various scrubs (e.g., chaparral, desert, riparian, and sage), and playas.

Surrounding Area

The surrounding area is generally flat and defined by an arid landscape, consisting of mainly undeveloped

and vacant land. Existing development in the area includes the US-95 and Lake Havasu Road. No established residential communities are directly adjacent to the Project Site. Other than sparse vegetation, the only natural visual resources present include distant views of the mountain foothills.

Scenic Vistas

Scenic vistas are typically expansive views from elevated areas. They may or may not be part of a designated scenic overlook or other area providing a static vista view of a landscape. The Project Site is located in a rural portion of the County and is not located within an area containing a scenic vista designated by the County's Countywide Plan. While there are scenic vistas in the desert regions, including views across desert landscapes, toward mountains, ridgelines, and rock formations, no designated scenic views, scenic vistas, or scenic resources are known to occur in the vicinity of the Project.

Scenic Highways

The Project Site is located along the southbound side of the US-95, a paved two-lane road and the nearest paved roadway. The nearest eligible scenic highway is a segment following the Interstate Route 40, US Route 95, Goffs Road and National Trails Highway to Barstow, California, located 13 miles north of the Project site.

Light and Glare

Within the North and East Desert Regions of San Bernardino, most sources of light and glare are generated in the communities and incorporated areas of the region, including Barstow, Victorville, Apple Valley, Hesperia, Twentynine Palms, and Needles. Sources of light and glare are generally typical urban uses, such as building (interior and exterior), roadway, vehicular traffic, security, sign illumination, and parking-area lighting. However, most of the desert land is undeveloped and dark.

4.1.2 Impact Analysis

a) Would the project have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista?

b) Would the project substantially damage scenic resources, including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a state scenic highway?

a&b) **Less Than Significant Impact.** Construction activities, including grading, equipment staging, and material storage, may result in short-term visual disturbances. However, these impacts would be temporary and limited to the construction period.

The Proposed Project would not add above ground infrastructure or buildings. The above ground components of the Project include removal of existing vegetation within the planned expansion area. There are no scenic vistas or highways within the Project vicinity. According to the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) Scenic Highway Program, the nearest eligible scenic highway is a segment following the Interstate Route 40, US Route 95, Goffs Road and National Trails Highway to Barstow, California, located 13 miles north of the Project site (Caltrans 2024). Due to this distance, the Project site is not visible from the scenic highway, and no visual intrusion would occur.

The Project area is characterized by open desert terrain with sparse, low-lying vegetation and no significant scenic features such as trees, rock outcroppings, or historic structures. There are no existing buildings visible from the Project area. The removal of vegetation within the planned expansion area would not result in substantial damage to scenic resources as the existing vegetation is not visually prominent or protected under local or state scenic resource policies.

Given these factors, the Project would not substantially degrade the existing visual character of the area or result in adverse effects on scenic vistas or scenic highways. Therefore, the impact is considered less than significant.

c) Would the project substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of public views of the site and its surroundings? (Public views are those that are experienced from publicly accessible vantage point). If the project is in an urbanized area, would the project conflict with applicable zoning and other regulations governing scenic quality?

Less Than Significant Impact. The surrounding landscape of the Project site consists primarily of undeveloped desert terrain with sparse, low-lying vegetation and no significant built structures. Public views of the project site are limited to those experienced by drivers and passengers traveling along US-95. The Project site is not within an urbanized area and does not conflict with any applicable zoning regulations or scenic quality standards.

The Project involves roadway improvements, including pavement expansion, addition of a left-turn pocket, and the removal of existing vegetation within the planned expansion area. No permanent above-ground structures or new vertical infrastructure will be added that could obstruct views or substantially alter the visual character of the area.

Construction activities, including grading, equipment staging, and material storage, may result in short-term visual disturbances. However, these impacts would be temporary and limited to the construction period.

Given these factors, the Project would not substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of public views of the site and its surroundings. Impacts would be less than significant.

d) Create a new source of substantial light or glare which would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area?

Less Than Significant. Due to the remote desert setting, the Project site and the surrounding area are currently devoid of significant nighttime lighting sources or daytime glare. Existing light sources in the Project area consist mainly of vehicle headlights during the night hours on U.S. Route 95 and local roadways. There are no existing structures in the Project area that create a substantial source of daytime glare.

The amount of light present in the Project Area would not change after completion of the Project. There are no permanent lighting fixtures proposed. There may be an increase in lighting during construction if work is being done during winter months when it is dark by 5 pm. The construction lighting would be temporary, focused downward and away from drivers. The impact would be less than significant.

4.2 AGRICULTURE & FORESTRY RESOURCES

2.	**AGRICULTURE & FOREST RESOURCES. In determining whether impacts to agricultural resources are significant environmental effects, lead agencies may refer to the California Agricultural Land Evaluation and Site Assessment Model (1997) prepared by the California Department of Conservation as an optional model to use in assessing impacts on agriculture and farmland. In determining whether impacts to forest resources, including timberland, are significant environmental effects, lead agencies may refer to information compiled by the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection regarding the state's inventory of forest land, including the Forest and Range Assessment Project and the Forest Legacy Assessment project; and forest carbon measurement methodology provided in Forest Protocols adopted by the California Air Resources Board Would the project:**	**Potentially Significant Impact**	**Less than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated**	**Less Than Significant Impact**	**No Impact**
(a)	Convert Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance (Farmland), as shown on the maps prepared pursuant to the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program of the California Resources Agency, to nonagricultural use?	☐	☐	☐	☒
(b)	Conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use, or a Williamson Act contract?	☐	☐	☐	☒
(c)	Conflict with existing zoning for, or cause rezoning of, forest land (as defined in Public Resources Code section 12220(g)), timberland (as defined by Public Resources Code section 4526), or timberland zoned Timberland Production (as defined by Government Code section 51104(g))?	☐	☐	☐	☒
(d)	Result in the loss of forest land or conversion of forest land to non-forest use?	☐	☐	☐	☒

2.	**AGRICULTURE & FOREST RESOURCES. In determining whether impacts to agricultural resources are significant environmental effects, lead agencies may refer to the California Agricultural Land Evaluation and Site Assessment Model (1997) prepared by the California Department of Conservation as an optional model to use in assessing impacts on agriculture and farmland. In determining whether impacts to forest resources, including timberland, are significant environmental effects, lead agencies may refer to information compiled by the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection regarding the state's inventory of forest land, including the Forest and Range Assessment Project and the Forest Legacy Assessment project; and forest carbon measurement methodology provided in Forest Protocols adopted by the California Air Resources Board Would the project:**	**Potentially Significant Impact**	**Less than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated**	**Less Than Significant Impact**	**No Impact**
(e)	Involve other changes in the existing environment which, due to their location or nature, could result in conversion of Farmland, to nonagricultural use or the conversion of forest land to non-forest use?	☐	☐	☐	☒

4.2.1 Environmental Setting

Farmland Protection and Policy Act

The Farmland Protection and Policy Act (FPPA) (7 USC §§ 4201 et. seq.), was enacted in 1981 to minimize the loss of prime farmland and unique farmlands because of federal actions by converting these lands to nonagricultural uses. It ensures that federal programs are compatible with state and local governments, and private programs and policies to protect farmland.

Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program

Pursuant to Government Code Section 65570, the California Department of Conservation Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program compiles important farmland maps for the state. These maps combine soil survey and current land use information from the United States Department of Agriculture and Natural Resource Conservation Service to provide an inventory of agricultural resources in each county. The maps show urbanized lands and a qualitative sequence of agricultural designations. County, state, and federal agencies have established several classifications of important agricultural land based on factors such as soil characteristics, climate, and water supply.

Prime Farmland. This land has the best combination of physical and chemical features and is able to sustain long-term agricultural production. It has the soil quality, growing season, and moisture supply needed to produce sustained high yields. Land must have been used for irrigated agricultural production at some time during the four years prior to the mapping date.

Farmland of Statewide Importance. Similar to Prime Farmland but with minor shortcomings, such as steeper slopes or less ability to store soil moisture. Land must have been used for irrigated agricultural production at some time during the four years prior to the mapping date.

Unique Farmland. Lesser-quality soils used for the production of the state's leading agricultural crops. This

land is usually irrigated, but may include unirrigated orchards or vineyards. Land must have been cultivated at some time during the four years prior to the mapping date.

Farmland of Local Importance. Land of importance to the local economy, as defined by each county's local advisory committee and adopted by its board of supervisors. This refers to all farmable lands in the county that do not meet the definitions of Prime, Statewide, or Unique. This includes land that is or has been used for irrigated pasture, dryland farming, confined livestock and dairy, poultry facilities, aquaculture, and grazing land.

California Land Conservation Act (Williamson Act)

The California Land Conservation Act, or Williamson Act, was adopted in 1965 (California Government Code §§ 51200 et. seq.). The Act was established to encourage the preservation of agricultural lands in view of the increasing trend toward their "premature and unnecessary" urbanization. The Act enables counties and cities to designate agricultural preserves (Williamson Act lands) and offer preferential taxation to agricultural landowners based on the land's income-producing value. In return for the preferential tax rate, the landowner is required to sign a contract (Williamson contract) with the county or city agreeing not to develop the land for a minimum of 10 years. The Williamson contract is renewed automatically on its anniversary date unless a notice of nonrenewal or petition for cancellation is filed.

Existing Agricultural and Forestry Conditions

Regional

There were 60,279 acres of agricultural use, including ranching, in unincorporated areas of the County in 2014. About 61 percent of the acreage in agricultural use was in the North Desert Region, and approximately 33 percent was in the Valley Region. About 64 percent of the total land in agricultural use was in unincorporated areas.

There were about 19,821 acres of mapped important farmland in the County in 2016. Approximately half that total (9,649 acres) was in the Valley Region, and nearly all the rest was in the North Desert Region. About 57 percent of the total was prime farmland, and most of the remainder was farmland of statewide importance. Approximately 61 percent of total important farmland was in unincorporated areas.

Conifer forests within the region are forests that are or could be cultivated for timber and other forest resources. Over 99 percent of the timber harvest in California in 2006 was of conifers. Countywide, 37,473 acres of forest and woodland vegetation are under County jurisdiction. Approximately 64 percent of that total (24,028 acres) is in the Mountain Region, and 36 percent (13,444 acres) is in the desert regions. None is in the Valley Region. Most of the conifer forests in the desert regions are in the eastern part of the San Bernardino Mountains in the East Desert Region. Of the total 270,704 acres of forest and woodland vegetation in the County, some 86 percent of it is outside of County jurisdiction.

Project Area

Most of the important farmland in the North Desert Region is in the Mojave River Valley near Barstow, Daggett, and Newberry Springs. However, there is no mapped important farmland or Williamson Act Lands within the Project vicinity (County 2020c). The nearest agricultural resources from the Project site

is located approximately 60 miles south in the City of Blythe, where the majority of the city is composed of Unique and Prime Farmland (DOC 2022).

Regarding forests, there are no conifer forests within the Project vicinity as vegetation in the area consists of low-lying shrubs and undeveloped desert terrain.

4.2.2 Impact Analysis

a) Would the project convert Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance (Farmland), as shown on the maps prepared pursuant to the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program of the California Resources Agency, to nonagricultural use?

No Impact. According to the California Important Farmland Finder, the Project area falls outsides pf the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) soil survey and is not mapped by the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program (FMMP) (DOC 2022). The County of San Bernardino does not designate any land within the Project vicinity as Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide importance (County 2020c). The closest designated farmland is approximately 60 miles south of the Project site in the City of Blythe. The Proposed Project will not convert Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance. Therefore, the Project would have no impact associated with converting any type of farmland to other nonagricultural uses.

b) Would the project conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use, or a Williamson Act contract?

No Impact. The Project site does not include any land zoned for agricultural use, or a Williamson Act contract (County 2020c). The Project site is zoned RC, which does not include agricultural uses. The road widening Project would have no impact associated with existing zoning for agricultural use, or a Williamson Act contract.

c) Would the project conflict with existing zoning for, or cause rezoning of, forest land (as defined in Public Resources Code section 12220(g)), timberland (as defined by Public Resources Code section 4526), or timberland zoned Timberland Production (as defined by Government Code section 51104(g))?

No Impact. The Project site is currently mostly vacant desert land and is not forested. Thus, the Project site is not located on land zoned as forest land, timberland, or timberland zoned Timberland Production. The Project site is zoned RC, which does not include agricultural uses. The Project would not conflict with forest land or timberland zoning, resulting in no impact.

d) Would the project result in the loss of forest land or conversion of forest land to non-forest use?

No Impact. As mentioned above, there is no forest land or timberland within the Project vicinity. The road widening would not result in loss of forest land or conversion of forest land to non-forest use. There would be no impact.

e) Would the project involve other changes in the existing environment which, due to their location or nature, could result in conversion of Farmland, to nonagricultural use or the conversion of forest land to non-forest use?

No Impact. There is no farmland or agricultural land in the Project area. The road widening would not result in conversion of farmland or forest land to non-forest use. There would be no impacts to farmland or forest land created by the Project.

4.3 AIR QUALITY

3.	**AIR QUALITY. Where available, the significance criteria established by the applicable air quality management district or air pollution control district may be relied upon to make the following determinations. Would the project:**	**Potentially Significant Impact**	**Less than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated**	**Less Than Significant Impact**	**No Impact**
(a)	Conflict with or obstruct implementation of the applicable air quality plan?	☐	☐	☒	☐
(b)	Result in a cumulatively considerable net increase of any criteria pollutant for which the project region is non-attainment under an applicable federal or state ambient air quality standard?	☐	☐	☒	☐
(c)	Expose sensitive receptors to substantial pollutant concentrations?	☐	☐	☐	☒
(d)	Result in other emissions, such as those leading to odors adversely affecting a substantial number of people?	☐	☐	☐	☒

4.3.1 Environmental Setting

On June 2022, 2025, Vista Environmental prepared an Air Quality and Greenhouse Gas Emissions Technical Memorandum (Air Report) in support of the Proposed Project. The Air Report is included in Appendix A.

An approximately 0.9-acre area will be disturbed as part of the Project. No material import/export, detours, or night construction are proposed.

Furthermore, The Mojave Desert Air Quality Management District's (MDAQMD) CEQA and Federal Conformity Guidelines, outlines significance determination thresholds (MDAQMD 2020). The MDAQMD Guidelines state that any project is significant if it triggers or exceed the most appropriate evaluation criteria, and further specifies that the emissions comparison (criteria number 1) is sufficient for most projects:

1. Generate total emissions (direct and indirect) in excess of the threshold given in Table A of the Air Report;
2. Generates a violation of any ambient air quality standard when added to the local background;
3. Does not conform with the applicable attainment or maintenance plan(s)1;
4. Exposes sensitive receptors to substantial pollutant concentrations, including those resulting in a cancer risk greater than or equal to 10 in a million and/or a Hazard Index (HI) (non-cancerous) greater than or equal to 1.

The MDAQMD significant emissions thresholds are shown in Table 3-1. According to the MDAQMD Guidelines, a significant project must incorporate mitigation sufficient to reduce its impact to a level that is not significant. A project that cannot be mitigated to a level that is not significant must incorporate all feasible mitigation. Note that the emission thresholds are given as a daily value and an annual value, so that multi-phased project (such as project with a construction phase and a separate operational phase) with phases shorter than one year can be compared to the daily value. Since construction of the proposed Project is anticipated to take over a year, the annual threshold has been utilized for both short-term construction impact analysis and long-term operational impacts.

Table 3-1. MDAQMD Significant Emissions Thresholds

Pollutant	Annual Threshold (tons)	Daily Threshold (Pounds)
Greenhouse Gases (CO_2e)	100,000	548,000
Carbon Monoxide (CO)	100	548
Oxides of Nitrogen (NO_x)	25	137
Volatile Organic Compounds	25	137
Oxides of Sulfur (SO_x)	25	137
Particulate Matter (PM_{10})	15	82
Particulate Matter ($PM_{2.5}$)	12	65
Hydrogen Sulfide (H_2S)	10	54
Lead (Pb)	0.6	3

Source: MDAQMD 2020

4.3.2 Impact Analysis

a) Would the project conflict with or obstruct implementation of the applicable air quality plan?

Less than Significant Impact. The proposed Project would not conflict with or obstruct implementation of the MDAQMD Air Quality Management Plans (AQMPs).The Project Site is located within the Mojave Desert Air Basin and is regulated by the MDAQMD. The MDAQMD Particulate Matter (PM) 10 Attainment Plan and Ozone Attainment Plan established under the Western Mojave Desert AQMPs set forth a comprehensive set of programs that will lead the Basin into compliance with Federal and State air quality standards. The control measures and related emission reduction estimates within the MDAQMD PM10 Attainment Plan and Ozone Attainment Plan are based upon emissions projections for a future development scenario derived from land use, population, and employment characteristics defined in consultation with local governments. Accordingly, conformance with these attainment plans is determined by:

- Demonstrating Project consistency with local land use plans and/or population projections (Criterion 1);
- Demonstrating Project compliance with applicable MDAQMD Rules and Regulations (Criterion 2); and
- Demonstrating Project implementation will not increase the frequency or severity of a violation in the Federal or State ambient air quality standards (Criterion 3).

Criterion 1: Consistency with local land use plans and/or population projections.

Growth projections included in the AQMPs form the basis for the projections of air pollutant emissions and are based on general plan land use designations and the *2024-2050 Regional Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategy* (Connect SoCal 2024), adopted by Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) on April 4, 2024 which is based on the regional development and growth forecasts provided in the *2023 Federal Transportation Improvement* Program (2023 FTIP), adopted October 2022, which addresses regional development and growth forecasts. While SCAG has recently adopted the Connect SoCal 2024, the MDAQMD has not released an updated AQMP that

utilizes information from the Connect SoCal 2024. As such, this consistency analysis is based off the 2016-2040 RTP/SCS. The population, housing, and employment forecasts within the 2016-2040 RTP/SCS are based on local general plans as well as input from local governments, such as the County. The MDAQMD has incorporated these same demographic growth forecasts for various socioeconomic categories (e.g., population, housing, employment) into the AQMPs.

The zoning maps maintained by the San Bernardino Land Use Services Department regulates various aspects of how land can be used. The Project site is designated and is zoned as Resource Conservation (RC). The RC land use zoning district provides sites for open space and recreational activities, single-family homes on very large parcels, and similar and compatible uses. Road widening is an allowable land use within the RC land use zoning district.

The County's unincorporated area population estimate as of January 1, 2021 was 1,871,997 persons, and the County's total area population estimate as of January 1, 2021 was 2,175,909 persons. SCAG growth forecasts in the 2016-2040 RTP/SCS estimate the County's population to reach 2,731,000 persons by 2040, representing a total increase of 620,000 persons between 2015 and 2040. Additionally, SCAG growth forecasts in the 2016-2040 RTP/SCS estimate the County's employment to reach 1,028,000 jobs by 2040, representing a total increase of 299,000 jobs between 2012 and 2040.

The proposed Project would include neither a residential component that would increase local population growth, nor a commercial component that would substantially increase employment. Construction of the proposed Project would not result in residential, commercial, or growth-inducing development that would result in a substantial increase in growth-related emissions. In addition, because of the presence of locally available construction workers, and because of the relatively short duration of construction (approximately 4 months), workers are not expected to relocate to the area with their families. The proposed Project's ongoing operations would not require any additional road maintenance activities than what is already occurring with the existing roads. As such, the proposed Project would not cause the SCAG growth forecast to be exceeded. As the MDAQMD has incorporated these forecasts on population, housing, and employment into the AQMPs, the Project would be consistent with the AQMPs. Impacts would be less than significant.

Criterion 2: Compliance with applicable MDAQMD Rules and Regulations

As discussed in Appendix A, the Project would be required to comply with all applicable MDAQMD Rules and Regulations. This would include MDAQMD Rules 401, 402, and 403. MDAQMD Rule 403 requires periodic watering for short-term stabilization of disturbed surface area to minimize visible fugitive dust (PM10) emissions, covering loaded haul vehicles, and reduction of non-essential earth moving activities during higher wind conditions. The proposed Project would comply with applicable MDAQMD rules, and as such, would not conflict with applicable MDAQMD Rules and Regulations; therefore, impacts would be less than significant.

Criterion 3: Demonstrating Project implementation will not increase the frequency or severity of a violation in the Federal or State ambient air quality standards.

Analysis of the proposed Project's potential to result in more frequent or severe violations of the California Ambient Air Quality Standards (CAAQS) and National Ambient Air Quality Standards NAAQS can be satisfied by comparing the proposed Project emissions to MDAQMD thresholds. Based on the air quality modeling analysis contained in Appendix A, short-term construction air emissions would

not result in significant impacts based on MDAQMD thresholds of significance discussed above. The ongoing operation of the proposed Project would generate air pollutant emissions that are inconsequential and would not result in significant impacts based on MDAQMD thresholds of significance discussed above. Therefore, the proposed Project would not delay the MDAQMD's attainment goals for ozone, PM10, and PM2.5, and would not result in an increase in the frequency or severity of existing air quality violations. As such, the proposed Project would not cause or contribute to localized air quality violations or delay the attainment of air quality standard or interim emissions reductions specified in the AQMPs; thus, impacts would be reduced to less than significant.

b) *Would the project result in a cumulatively considerable net increase of any criteria pollutant for which the project region is non-attainment under an applicable federal or state ambient air quality standard?*

Less than Significant. Short-term construction-related and long-term operation-related impacts are discussed separately below and in the Air Report included in Appendix A.

Short-Term Construction-Related Air Quality Impacts.

As discussed in Appendix A, construction of the proposed Project would create air emissions from the operation of construction equipment as well as from fugitive dust generated from the movement of dirt onsite. Construction of the proposed project is anticipated to start in December 2025 and would take approximately 100 workdays to complete.

The criteria air pollution impacts created by the proposed project have been analyzed through use of CalEEMod Version 2022.1.29. CalEEMod is a computer model published by the California Air Pollution Control Officers Association (CAPCOA) for estimating air pollutant and GHG emissions. The CalEEMod 2022.1 program uses the EMFAC2021 computer program to calculate the emission rates specific for the Mojave Desert portion of San Bernardino County for employee, vendor and haul truck vehicle trips and the OFFROAD2011 computer programs to calculate emission rates for heavy equipment operations. EMFAC2021 and OFFROAD2011 are computer programs generated by CARB that calculates composite emission rates for vehicles.

The CalEEMod model provides a land use option specific for road widening projects that was utilized and was based on a 0.6 mile road widening that would disturb a 0.9 mile area, and was based on a 100 workday construction period. The only changes to the CalEEMod default parameters included adding a concrete saw and export of 435 tons of pavement debris during the Grubbing and Land Clearing, in order to account for the saw cut and removal of approximately 2 feet of the edge of the existing pavement. In addition, three water trucks per day with a 0.6 mile length were added to the Grubbing and Grading phases to account for water truck emissions. A summary of the daily construction-related criteria pollutant emissions from the proposed project is shown below in Table 3-2.

Table 3-2. Construction-Related Criteria Pollutant Emissions

Season and Year of Construction	Maximum Daily Pollutant Emissions (pounds/day)					
	VOC	NOx	CO	SO2	PM10	PM2.5
Winter 2025	3.88	32.9	39.2	0.07	5.61	1.84
Summer 2026	1.93	16.1	21.9	0.04	4.04	0.96
Winter 2026	3.67	30.2	38.7	0.07	5.45	1.70
Maximum Daily Construction Emissions	3.88	32.9	39.2	0.07	5.61	1.84
MDAQMD Daily Thresholds	137	137	548	137	82	65
Exceeds Thresholds?	**No**	**No**	**No**	**No**	**No**	**No**

Source: CalEEMod Version 2022.1

Table 3-2 shows that none of the analyzed criteria pollutants would exceed the MDAQMD daily thresholds during construction of the proposed Project. Therefore, a less than significant air quality impact would occur from construction of the proposed Project

Long-Term Operational Air Quality Impacts

The purpose of the proposed turn pocket project is to improve traffic flow, enhance safety and meet increasing capacity demands. The proposed Project's ongoing operations would not generate any additional vehicle trips, as it would not require any additional road maintenance activities than what is already occurring with the existing roads. The operation of the proposed Project would not change traffic volumes or vehicle miles traveled (VMT) and will provide a slight improvement to the US-95 and Havasu Lake Road intersection level of service (LOS) and vehicle hours traveled (VHT). As such, the on-going operation of the proposed Project is not anticipated to generate any additional criteria pollutant air emissions, when compared to existing conditions and no operational air modeling has been provided in this analysis. Therefore, no air quality impacts would occur from the ongoing operation of the proposed Project.

c) *Would the project expose sensitive receptors to substantial pollutant concentrations?*

No Impact. As stated in Appendix A, there are no sensitive receptors located within several miles of the Project site. Furthermore, as discussed in section b), Project construction and operations would not exceed any air quality thresholds established by the MDAQMD. Thus, no impact towards sensitive receptors would occur.

d) *Would the project result in other emissions, such as those leading to odors adversely affecting a substantial number of people?*

No Impact. The Project involves improvements along an existing segment of the US-95 in a remote area with no residences or other sensitive receptors located within several miles of the site. As detailed above, construction activities would result in temporary emissions typical of roadwork, such as exhaust from construction equipment and occasional asphalt odors. However, these emissions would be short-term, localized, and would not affect a substantial number of people due to the

remote setting. No long-term operational odor sources are associated with the Project. Therefore, the Project would not result in other emissions, such as those leading to odors adversely affecting a substantial number of people. No impact would occur.

4.4 BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES

4.	BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES. Would the project:	Potentially Significant Impact	Less than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
(a)	Have a substantial adverse effect, either directly or through habitat modifications, on any species identified as a candidate, sensitive, or special status species in local or regional plans, policies, or regulations, or by the California Department of Fish and Game or U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service?	☐	☐	☐	☒
(b)	Have a substantial adverse effect on any riparian habitat or other sensitive natural community identified in local or regional plans, policies, regulations or by the California Department of Fish and Game or U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service?	☐	☒	☐	☐
(c)	Have a substantial adverse effect on state or federally protected wetlands (including, but not limited to, marsh, vernal pool, coastal, etc.) through direct removal, filling, hydrological interruption, or other means?	☐	☐	☐	☒
(d)	Interfere substantially with the movement of any native resident or migratory fish or wildlife species or with established native resident or migratory wildlife corridors, or impede the use of native wildlife nursery sites?	☐	☒	☐	☐
(e)	Conflict with any local policies or ordinances protecting biological resources, such as a tree preservation policy or ordinance?	☐	☒	☐	☐
(f)	Conflict with the provisions of an adopted Habitat Conservation Plan, Natural Community Conservation Plan, or other approved local, regional, or state habitat conservation plan?	☐	☒	☐	☐

4.4.1 Environmental Setting

The Project site is situated in a remote portion of San Bernardino County within the transition zone between the Mojave and Sonoran Deserts. The site lies within the Bureau of Land Management's Mojave Trails National Monument, adjacent to the Stepladder Mountains Wilderness and the Chemehuevi Mountains Wilderness. The immediate environment consists of desert scrub vegetation, undeveloped open land, paved highways, dirt roads, and roadside turnouts. Vegetation is sparse and typical of Sonoran and Mojave Desert Scrub, including creosote bush and, in some areas, Joshua trees.

Geologically, the Project area is underlain by Quaternary alluvium and older marine deposits associated with sedimentation from the Colorado River system. Soils in the area are dominated by gravelly sandy loams and loamy coarse sands from the Chemehuevi, Rizzo, Emptygun, and related series (USDA 2019).

Regulatory Setting

The California Desert Conservation Area (CDCA) Plan

Under the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (FLPMA), the CDCA Plan was approved in 1980 to protect biological, geological, paleontological, scenic, and cultural resources in approximately 25 million acres in seven counties, including the County. The plan provides for multiple-use management, but about 10 million acres are managed by the BLM. Major amendments to the CDCA Plan in the County include the BLM Northern and Eastern Colorado Desert Coordinated Management Plan, BLM Northern and Eastern Mojave Desert Management Plan, BLM West Mojave Plan, and Desert Renewable Energy Conservation Plan (DRECP) Land Use Plan Amendment.

Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA)

The MBTA implements international treaties between the United States and other nations that protect migratory birds (including their parts, eggs, and nests) from being killed, hunted, pursued, captured, sold, and shipped unless expressly authorized or permitted

County Development Code

The following provisions from the County Development Code help minimize biological resources impacts associated with new development projects and are relevant to the Proposed Project.

- **Chapter 88.01 (Plant Protection and Management).** This chapter provides regulatory and management guidance for plant resources in unincorporated areas as well as mixed public and private lands. It primarily addresses tree and vegetation removal in public land and private land in unincorporated areas
    - **Section 88.01.060, Desert Native Plant Protection**, conserves specified desert plant species.

4.4.2 Impact Analysis

a) Would the project have a substantial adverse effect, either directly or through habitat modification, on any species identified as candidate, sensitive or special status species in local or regional plans, policies or regulations, or by the California Department of Fish and Game or U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service?

No Impact. A Biological Reconnaissance Assessment was prepared for the Proposed Project by Chambers Group in June 2025. The Biological Reconnaissance Assessment included a literature review and reconnaissance survey to assess the Project site's existing conditions. Complete details and results of the survey are provided in Appendix B. Based on the results of the literature review and reconnaissance survey, the Project site was found to have the following special status plants and wildlife conditions.

Based on desktop research, there are 11 special status plant species, and 14 special status wildlife species documented to historically occur within the vicinity of Project site. The full list of special status species known to occur within the Project vicinity can be found in Appendix B. On April 9, 2025, Chambers Group biologists conducted a biological reconnaissance survey on foot within the Project

site to identify vegetation communities, the potential for occurrence of special status species, and/or habitats that could support special status wildlife species During the survey, none of the 11 special status plant species that were identified in the literature review were identified within the Project site due to lack of suitable habitat. After a literature review and the assessment of the various habitat types within the Project site, it was determined that 13 special status wildlife species are considered absent and one species (Desert tortoise (*Gopherus agassizii*)) has low potential to occur within or adjacent to the site.

While the desert tortoise has been recorded within 1 mile of the site and the site occurs within designated critical habitat, no observations of this species have been recorded since 1987 and the habitat within and surrounding the site is of low quality. Therefore, no impacts to desert tortoise are anticipated to occur as a result of Project activities. None of the species with potential to occur and no sign (active burrows, scat, etc.) were observed within the Project vicinity during the survey.

Due to the lack of suitable habitat and absence of special status species on the Project site, no impact would occur regarding special status species.

b) *Would the project have a substantial adverse effect on any riparian habitat or other sensitive natural community identified in local or regional plans, policies or regulations, or by the California Department of Fish and Game or U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service?*

Less than Significant Impact with Mitigation Incorporated. The Project site is located within the United States Fish and Wildlife Service's (USFWS) designated critical habitat for desert tortoise (Appendix B). As previously discussed, desert tortoise has not been observed within the Project vicinity since 1987. However, this does not preclude the possibility of this species occurring within the Project vicinity during construction. Therefore, Mitigation Measure (MM) BIO-1 shall be implemented to reduce impacts to less than significant.

> **MM BIO-1:** Per the Biological Reconnaissance Assessment, the Project site has low potential to have a special status wildlife species, desert tortoise (*Gopherus agassizii*), to be present on-site. Because the Project site is located within USFWS designated critical habitat, a pre-construction survey for desert tortoise shall be done prior to initiating ground disturbance to ensure no desert tortoise migrating through the area are present on site. If a tortoise or an active burrow is observed no work shall occur within 500 feet of the burrow and a qualified biological monitor shall be present throughout construction activities.

c) *Would the project have a substantial adverse effect on state or federally protected wetlands (including but not limited to marsh, vernal pool, coastal, etc.) through direct removal, filling, hydrological interruption, or other means?*

No Impact. According to Appendix B, two potentially jurisdictional water features were observed within the Project boundary. One riverine drainage feature runs through the southern border of the site, inside the Project boundary, and one mapped stream runs through the northern border of the site, inside the Project boundary. While the two features occur within the mapped Project boundary, both features occur near the outside boundaries and are located outside of the permanent impact area where work activities are not anticipated to occur and should not be impacted by Project activities. No work activities would occur within the two mapped drainage features. BMPs implemented under the required WPCP (refer to Section 3.10.2), would be used to prevent any spoils

from flowing off the site in the event of a storm. No impacts to federally protected wetlands are anticipated to occur as a result of the Proposed Project.

d) *Would the project Interfere substantially with the movement of any native resident or migratory fish or wildlife species or with established native resident or migratory wildlife corridors, or impede the use of native wildlife nursery sites?*

Less than Significant Impact with Mitigation Incorporated. As discussed in Appendix B, the Project site lies within USFWS designated critical habitat for desert tortoise. Although no observations of this species have been recorded in the Project area since 1987, this does not preclude the possibility that the species may utilize the site as habitat or a migration corridor. MM BIO-1 shall be implemented to ensure impacts to this special status species do not occur.

Ground disturbing activities could impact nesting birds that are protected under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA) which may be present at the Project site. Therefore, MM BIO-2 shall be implemented to ensure that impacts to nesting birds would be less than significant.

> **MM BIO-2:** To minimize potential impacts to nesting birds protected under the MBTA within the Project, construction activities shall take place outside nesting season (February 1 to August 31) to the greatest extent practicable. The survey shall be scheduled with and conducted by a qualified biologist in coordination with the County and on-site construction manager.
>
> If construction activities must occur during nesting season, a preconstruction nesting bird survey shall be conducted prior to initiation of ground-disturbing activities. The survey shall be completed within 14 days prior to ground disturbing activities, which consist of, but are not limited to, tree removal, trenching, etc.
>
> During the survey, should nesting birds or their nests be encountered, to the maximum extent practicable, a minimum buffer zone around occupied nests should be determined by a qualified biologist to avoid impacts to the active nest. The buffer shall range at a minimum of 100 to 300 feet. The buffer should be maintained during physical ground-disturbing activities. Avoidance measures that shall be implemented if the biologist finds that it is required to not impact the nests include but are not limited to noise, activity, and design modifications, worker education, signage, buffers and/or temporary fencing. Once the biologist has determined that the nesting has ceased and the nestlings have fledged, the buffer may be removed.

Therefore, compliance with existing regulation and implementation of MM BIO-1 and MM BIO-2 would reduce impacts to less than significant.

e) *Would the project conflict with any local policies or ordinances protecting biological resources, such as a tree preservation policy or ordinance?*

Less than Significant Impact with Mitigation Incorporated. The Proposed Project would involve clearing of vegetation within the Project boundary. Per County Development Code Section 88.01.060, the Proposed Project shall not remove the following desert native plants or any part of them, except the fruit, unless the applicant acquires a Tree or Plant Removal Permit in compliance with §88.01.050 (Tree or Plant Removal Permits):

1. The following desert native plants with stems two inches or greater in diameter or six feet or greater in height:

a. Dalea spinosa (smoketree)
b. All species of the genus Prosopis (mesquites).

2. All species of the family Agavaceae (century plants, nolinas, yuccas).

3. Creosote Rings, ten feet or greater in diameter.

4. All Joshua trees.

5. Any part of any of the following species, whether living or dead:

a. Olneya tesota (desert ironwood).
b. All species of the genus Prosopis (mesquites).
c. All species of the genus Cercidium (palos verdes).

Out of this list, none of these were observed during the biological resources survey, as documented in Appendix B; therefore, no tree or plant removal permit would be required. Implementation of MM BIO-1 and MM BIO-2 would reduce impacts on biological resources to less than significant.

f) Would the project conflict with the provisions of an adopted Habitat Conservation Plan, Natural Conservancy Conservation Plan, or other approved local, regional, or state habitat conservation plan?

Less than Significant Impact with Mitigation Incorporated. The San Bernardino Countywide Plan outlines various preservation policies to protect the County's biological resources. Such County policies include coordination with Habitat Conservation and Natural Resource Management Plans, conservation actions that demonstrate multiple resource preservation benefits, and required mitigation banking.

The California Desert Conservation Area (CDCA) Plan includes Designated Tortoise Conservation Areas (TCAs) and management prescriptions that restrict or regulate land uses such as off-road vehicle activity, grazing, and development to minimize habitat disturbance and fragmentation (BLM 1980). In areas like eastern San Bernardino County, including the Project site, the CDCA Plan guides land use to ensure that desert tortoise populations and their habitats are maintained and recovered in accordance with federal recovery plans and biological opinions. As previously discussed, MM BIO-1 would ensure less than significant impacts to migrating desert tortoise would occur.

Therefore, in compliance with the San Bernardino Countywide Plan, the CDCA Plan, and incorporation of MM BIO-1 and MM BIO-2, the Project would have a less than significant impact in regard to local policies and habitat conservation plans protecting biological resources.

4.5 CULTURAL RESOURCES

5.	CULTURAL RESOURCES. Would the project:	Potentially Significant Impact	Less than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
(a)	Cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a historical resource pursuant to §15064.5?	☐	☐	☐	☒

5.	CULTURAL RESOURCES. Would the project:	Potentially Significant Impact	Less than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
(b)	Cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of an archaeological resource pursuant to §15064.5?	☐	☒	☐	☐
(c)	Disturb any human remains, including those interred outside of formal cemeteries?	☐	☒	☐	☐

4.5.1 Environmental Setting

The Project is situated in a remote portion of San Bernardino County within the transition zone between the Mojave and Sonoran Deserts. The site lies within the Bureau of Land Management's Mojave Trails National Monument, adjacent to the Stepladder Mountains Wilderness and the Chemehuevi Mountains Wilderness. The immediate environment consists of desert scrub vegetation, undeveloped open land, paved highways, dirt roads, and roadside turnouts. Vegetation is sparse and typical of Sonoran and Mojave Desert Scrub, including creosote bush and, in some areas, Joshua trees.

Geologically, the Project area is underlain by Quaternary alluvium and older marine deposits associated with sedimentation from the Colorado River system (Appendix C). Soils in the area are dominated by gravelly sandy loams and loamy coarse sands from the Chemehuevi, Rizzo, Emptygun, and related series (USDA 2019).

The area experiences an arid desert climate with hot summers, cool winters, and variable precipitation from both Pacific frontal systems and monsoonal storms. This landscape, climate, and proximity to key hydrological features such as the Colorado River have historically supported both seasonal and permanent indigenous occupation, as evidenced by rich archaeological and ethnographic records spanning from the Paleoindian period to historic times.

In addition to its natural and ethnographic context, the Project site lies within the historic boundaries of the Desert Training Center/California–Arizona Maneuver Area (DTC/C-AMA), a World War II-era military training facility established by General George S. Patton in 1942. Its purpose was to prepare American troops for combat in North Africa and southern Europe. Numerous temporary camps, airfields, and associated infrastructure were constructed throughout the region. While no specific features of the DTC have yet been documented within the immediate Project area, the potential for associated archaeological or historic resources remains.

Regulatory Setting

State

California Register of Historic Resources (CRHR)

The California Register of Historical Resources (CRHR) is the state's official list of cultural resources worthy of preservation. Managed by the California Office of Historic Preservation, the CRHR includes buildings, structures, sites, objects, and districts that reflect California's heritage and meet established criteria for historical significance. These criteria evaluate a resource's association with important historical events or

people, its embodiment of distinctive characteristics or construction methods, and its potential to yield important information about the past. Resources listed in or found eligible for the CRHR are afforded protection under CEQA, meaning any project that could adversely affect such a resource must undergo environmental review and mitigation as necessary.

Native American Heritage Commission (NAHC) Sacred Lands File (SLF)

The Sacred Lands File (SLF), maintained by the Native American Heritage Commission (NAHC), is a confidential record of known Native American sacred sites in California. When a project is proposed, a Sacred Lands File search is requested to determine whether any sacred or culturally significant sites are known to exist within or near the project area. While a negative SLF result indicates no known sacred sites on file, it does not guarantee that such resources are absent—it simply means they have not been documented in the database. The SLF search is typically followed by outreach to Native American tribes to ensure thorough consultation and to protect traditional cultural places.

Federal

National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) Section 106

Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) requires federal agencies to consider the effects of their actions on historic properties that are listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP). This regulation mandates a structured consultation process with stakeholders, including State Historic Preservation Officers (SHPOs), Native American tribes, and other interested parties. The process involves identifying historic properties, assessing adverse effects, and seeking ways to avoid, minimize, or mitigate those effects. Section 106 ensures that federal projects do not inadvertently harm important cultural resources and that such impacts are addressed transparently and collaboratively.

Code of Regulations (CFR) Title 36 Part 800 – Protection of Historic Properties

36 CFR Part 800 outlines the federal process for compliance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA). It requires federal agencies to consider the effects of their undertakings on historic properties listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. The process involves identifying historic properties within a project's area of potential effects, assessing whether those properties would be adversely affected, and consulting with the State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO), Tribal Historic Preservation Officer (THPO), Native American tribes, and other stakeholders to resolve any adverse effects. If impacts cannot be avoided, mitigation measures must be developed, often formalized through a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA). The regulation also provides procedures for handling unanticipated discoveries during construction.

Secretary of the Interior's Standards (SOI) Professional Qualification Standards

The Secretary of the Interior's Professional Qualification Standards establish the minimum education and experience required for professionals conducting work in historic preservation fields, including archaeology, history, and architectural history. For archaeology, the standards require a graduate degree in archaeology, anthropology, or a closely related field, along with demonstrated experience in fieldwork, research, analysis, and report preparation. These qualifications ensure that cultural resources are evaluated and managed by appropriately trained professionals, especially during environmental review

and in response to unanticipated discoveries. Adherence to these standards is considered best practice and is often required for compliance with both state and federal historic preservation laws.

4.5.2 Impact Analysis

a) Would the project cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a historical resource pursuant to §15064.5?

No Impact. In May 2025, Chambers Group prepared an Archaeological Survey for the US-95 at Havasu Lake Road Improvement Project (Archeological Survey) to gather and analyze information needed to assess the potential for effects to any cultural resources within the Project site. This report can be found in Appendix C.

Prior to conducting a field survey, a records search at the California Historical Resources Information System (CHRIS) South Central Coastal Information Center (SCCIC) identified five previously recorded cultural resources within a half-mile radius study area, two of which are located within the Project site (P-36-024812 and P-36-024816). Additionally, the Desert Training Center (DTC)/California-Arizona Maneuver Area (CAMA) (California Historical Landmark [CHL]-985) encompasses the Project site. The requested Native American Heritage Commission (NAHC) Sacred Lands File (SLF) search results were negative, indicating no sacred sites were identified within the Project site. Background research yielded no findings of cultural or archaeological significance (Appendix C).

As discussed in Appendix C, during the field survey conducted by Chambers Group on April 14, 2025, no new cultural resources were identified. Two known cultural resources (P-36-024812 and P-36-024816) were physically identified on the Project site and were determined to be ineligible for listing on the California Register of Historical Resources (CRHR) and the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP). The resource P-36-024812 was determined ineligible due to the site's lack of integrity. The resource P-36-024816 was determined ineligible due to its lack of association with any important historical event, facility, or person, its common and indistinctive nature as a purely functional and utilitarian structure, and its lack of potential to yield important information about history (see Section 4 of Appendix C). Based on the location of both ineligible resources, neither cultural resource will be subject to direct impacts associated with the Project.

Based on the results of the records search review, background research, and field survey, as documented in Appendix C, no historical resources, as defined per CEQA Guidelines §15064.5(a), were identified within the Project site; therefore, no impacts to historical resources are expected.

b) Would the project cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of an archaeological resource pursuant to §15064.5?

Less than Significant Impact with Mitigation Incorporated. As discussed in Appendix C, no known cultural resources would be impacted under the Proposed Project. However, this does not preclude the potential discovery of previously unknown archaeological resources during grading activities on undisturbed land. For post-review discoveries of cultural resources, the Project is required to adhere to 36 CFR 800.13(b), "discoveries without prior planning," and industry standard best management practices regarding the unanticipated discovery of cultural resources, detailed below in MM CUL-1, MM CUL-2, and in Appendix C.

MM CUL-1 If cultural resources are encountered during ground-disturbing activities, work in the immediate area must halt and an archaeologist meeting the Secretary of the Interior's (SOI) Professional Qualifications Standards for archaeology will be contacted immediately to evaluate the find. Ground-disturbing activities will not resume until all the stipulations of the Code of Regulations (CFR) Title 36 Part 800.13(b) and (c) are satisfied and the Lead Agency has authorized a continuance. If the discovery proves to be significant under CEQA or the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA), additional work such as data recovery excavation and Native American consultation may be necessary to mitigate any significant impacts.

MM CUL-2 The County shall retain an SOI-Qualified Archaeologist to remain on-call for the duration of the Project's ground-disturbing construction activity to ensure the expedient response and assessment to inadvertent findings of cultural resources during construction.

Therefore, compliance with existing regulations and incorporation MM CUL-1 and MM CUL-2 would make impacts less than significant.

c) Would the project disturb any human remains, including those interred outside of formal cemeteries?

Less than Significant Impact with Mitigation Incorporated. The Archeological Survey did not identify any evidence of human remains, including those interred outside of formal cemeteries within the Project site or surrounding area (Appendix C). However, this does not preclude the potential discovery of previously unknown human remains during grading activities on undisturbed land.

MM CUL-3 In the event that human remains are discovered during ground-disturbing activities, then the Project would be subject to California Health and Safety Code 7050.5, CEQA Section 15064.5, and California Public Resources Code (PRC) Section 5097.98. If human remains are found during ground-disturbing activities, State of California Health and Safety Code Section 7050.5 states that no further disturbance shall occur until the County Medical Examiner-Coroner has made a determination of origin and disposition pursuant to PRC Section 5097.98. In the event of an unanticipated discovery of human remains, the County Medical Examiner-Coroner shall be notified immediately. If the human remains are determined to be of Native American ancestry, the Medical Examiner-Coroner shall notify the NAHC, which shall notify a most likely descendant (MLD). The MLD shall complete the inspection of the site within 48 hours of notification and may recommend scientific removal and nondestructive analysis of human remains and items associated with Native American burials (NPS 1983).

Incorporation of MM CUL-3, in compliance with existing regulations, would make impacts less than significant.

4.6 ENERGY

6.	ENERGY Would the project:	Potentially Significant Impact	Less than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
(a)	Result in potentially significant environmental impact due to wasteful, inefficient, or unnecessary consumption of energy resources, during project construction or operation?	☐	☐	☒	☐

6.	ENERGY Would the project:	Potentially Significant Impact	Less than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
(b)	Conflict with or obstruct a state or local plan for renewable energy or energy efficiency?	☐	☐	☒	☐

4.6.1 Environmental Setting

The Project is located in a remote, rural portion of the southeastern County area, approximately 20 miles south of the City of Needles, California, along US-95. The Project area is characterized by desert terrain and sparse development, with limited existing energy infrastructure. US-95 is a two-lane highway that serves regional transportation needs, including access to Lake Havasu via Lake Havasu Road. The surrounding area includes federal lands managed by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), with low vehicular traffic volumes and minimal built infrastructure.

Regulatory Framework

Several federal and state regulations govern energy use and efficiency in California:

- **California Energy Commission (CEC):** Oversees energy policy and planning for the state, including the promotion of energy efficiency and renewable energy programs.
- **California Energy Efficiency Strategic Plan (CEESP):** Provides a roadmap for achieving energy savings across the state, with a focus on zero net energy for new buildings, as well as improvements in transportation energy efficiency.
- **Title 24, California Code of Regulations:** Sets energy efficiency standards for buildings and appliances. Although Title 24 applies primarily to habitable structures, it reflects the state's broader commitment to minimizing energy waste.
- **California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines Appendix F – Energy Conservation:** Requires consideration of energy implications in environmental documents, including potential impacts due to wasteful, inefficient, or unnecessary consumption of energy resources during construction or operation.
- **Executive Order B-55-18 and Senate Bill 100:** These policies direct California toward carbon neutrality by 2045 and require 100% clean electricity by 2045.

Project Area Existing Energy Use

Energy usage in the Project vicinity is minimal and primarily associated with transportation along US-95. There is no lighting, signalization, or other energy-intensive infrastructure in the immediate area of the proposed Project. Electricity in the broader region is generally provided by Southern California Edison and the City of Needles Electric Department, and petroleum fuels are distributed by regional suppliers via trucking. Given the Project's rural location, local energy demand is low and largely limited to vehicular fuel use.

4.6.2 Impact Analysis

a) Would the project a) result in potentially significant environmental impact due to wasteful, inefficient, or unnecessary consumption of energy resources, during project construction or operation?

b) Would the project conflict with or obstruct a state or local plan for renewable energy or energy efficiency?

a & b) Less than Significant Impact. The proposed Project involves widening an existing road. During construction, the Project would consume energy in two general forms: (1) the electricity and fuel energy consumed by construction vehicles and equipment; and (2) bound energy in construction materials, such as asphalt, steel, concrete, pipes, and manufactured or processed materials such as lumber. Asphalt, cement, and the removed vegetation accumulated during demolition will be recycled during construction. The construction duration is approximately 30 days. Construction would require energy for the manufacture and transportation of construction materials, preparation of the site and excavation activities, and paving. Petroleum fuels (e.g., diesel and gasoline) would be the primary sources of energy for these activities. However, energy usage on the Project site during construction would be temporary in nature. During operations, energy use would be similar to existing conditions. There would be no energy use during operations as there are no streetlights or traffic signals in the Project area. The proposed Project would result in a less than significant impact associated with wasteful, inefficient, or unnecessary consumption of energy sources. The Project would not conflict with or obstruct state and local plans for renewable or energy efficiency. Impacts are less than significant.

4.7 GEOLOGY AND SOILS

7.	GEOLOGY AND SOILS. Would the project:	Potentially Significant Impact	Less than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
(a)	Directly or indirectly cause potential substantial adverse effects, including the risk of loss, injury, or death involving:				
	i) Rupture of a known earthquake fault, as delineated on the most recent Alquist-Priolo Earthquake Fault Zoning Map issued by the State Geologist for the area or based on other substantial evidence of a known fault? Refer to Division of Mines and Geology Special Publication 42.	☐	☐	☐	☒
	ii) Strong seismic ground shaking?	☐	☐	☐	☒
	iii) Seismic-related ground failure, including liquefaction?	☐	☐	☐	☒
	iv) Landslides?	☐	☐	☐	☒
(b)	Result in substantial soil erosion or the loss of topsoil?	☐	☐	☒	☐
(c)	Be located on a geologic unit or soil that is unstable, or that would become unstable as a result of the project, and potentially result in on- or off-site landslide, lateral spreading, subsidence, liquefaction or collapse?	☐	☐	☐	☒

7.	GEOLOGY AND SOILS. Would the project:	Potentially Significant Impact	Less than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
(d)	Be located on expansive soil, as defined in Table 18-1-B of the Uniform Building Code (1994), creating substantial direct or indirect risks to life or property?	☐	☐	☐	☒
(e)	Have soils incapable of adequately supporting the use of septic tanks or alternative waste water disposal systems where sewers are not available for the disposal of waste water?	☐	☐	☐	☒
(f)	Directly or indirectly destroy a unique paleontological resource or site or unique geologic feature?	☐	☐	☒	☐

4.7.1 Environmental Setting

Regulatory Setting

Federal

Clean Water Act

The federal Water Pollution Control Act of 1948, as amended in 1972, (33 USC § 1251 et seq.)(also known as the Clean Water Act [CWA]) is the principal statute governing water quality. The CWA establishes the basic structure for regulating discharges of pollutants into the waters of the United States and gives the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) the authority to implement pollution control programs, such as setting wastewater standards for industry. The statute's goal is to end all discharges entirely and to restore, maintain, and preserve the integrity of the nation's waters. The CWA regulates both direct and indirect discharge of pollutants into the nation's waters. The CWA sets water quality standards for all contaminants in surface waters and makes it unlawful to discharge any pollutant from a point source into navigable waters unless a permit is obtained under its provisions. The CWA mandates permits for wastewater and stormwater discharges and requires states to establish site-specific water quality standards for navigable bodies of water. The CWA also recognizes the need for planning to address nonpoint sources of pollution.

Earthquake Hazards Reduction Act

The Earthquake Hazards Reduction Act (42 USC § 7701 et seq.) was enacted in 1977 to reduce the risks to life and property from future earthquakes in the United States through the establishment and maintenance of an effective earthquake hazards reduction program. To accomplish this, the act established the National Earthquake Hazard Reduction Program (NEHRP), which refined the description of agency responsibilities, program goals, and objectives. NEHRP's mission includes improved understanding, characterization, and prediction of seismic hazards and vulnerabilities; improvement of building codes and land use practices; risk reduction through post-earthquake investigations and education; development and improvement of design and construction techniques; improvement of mitigation capacity; and accelerated application of research results. NEHRP designates the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) as the lead agency of the program and assigns it several planning, coordinating, and reporting responsibilities. Programs under NEHRP help inform and guide

planning and building code requirements such as emergency evacuation responsibilities and seismic code standards.

State

Alquist-Priolo Earthquake Fault Zoning Act

The Alquist-Priolo Earthquake Fault Zoning Act (California Public Resources Code § 2621 et seq.) was passed in 1972 to mitigate the hazard of surface faulting to structures used for human occupancy. The main purpose of the act is to prevent the construction of buildings used for human occupancy on top of the traces of active faults. Although the act addresses the hazards associated with surface-fault rupture, it does not address other earthquake-related hazards, such as seismically-induced ground shaking, liquefaction, or landslides. The law requires the state geologist to establish regulatory zones (known as Earthquake Fault Zones or Alquist-Priolo Zones)—averaging about 0.25 mile wide—around the surface traces of active faults, and to publish appropriate maps that depict these zones. The maps are then distributed to all affected cities, counties, and state agencies for their use in planning and controlling new or renewed construction. In general, construction within an Alquist-Priolo Zone requires a fault investigation be approved by the County prior to issuing grading and building permits. The Act seeks to prevent construction or major rehabilitation of structures used for human occupancy within 50 feet of an active fault.

Seismic Hazards Mapping Act

The Seismic Hazards Mapping Act (California Public Resources Code § 2690-2699.6 et seq.) was passed in 1990 to mitigate earthquake hazards other than surface-fault rupture, including seismically-induced ground shaking, liquefaction and landsliding. Under this act, seismic hazard zones have been mapped by the State Geologist to assist local governments in land use planning. The act aims to identify and map seismic hazard zones in order for cities and counties to adequately prepare the safety element of their general plans and to encourage land-use management policies and regulations to reduce and mitigate those hazards to protect public health and safety. Section 2697(a) of the Act states that "cities and counties shall require, prior to the approval of a project located in a seismic hazard zone, a geotechnical report defining and delineating any seismic hazard."

California Building Code

The California Building Standards Code, also known as Title 24 of the California Code of Regulations, reflects various building standards that have been derived from different sources. One of these sources is the International Building Code, a model building code adopted across the United States that has been modified to suit conditions in the State, thereby creating what is known as the California Building Code (CBC), or Part 2 of CCR Title 24.

The CBC is updated every three years; the 2016 CBC took effect January 1, 2017. Much of the CBC is adopted by reference in the County Code, Title 6, Division 3, Chapter 1, as of January 1, 2018. Through the CBC, the State provides a minimum standard for building design and construction. The CBC contains specific requirements for seismic safety, excavation, foundations, retaining walls, and site demolition. It also regulates grading activities, including drainage and erosion control.

Caltrans Statewide Stormwater Management Plan (SWMP)

The Caltrans Statewide Stormwater Management Plan (SWMP) outlines the agency's approach to managing stormwater discharges in compliance with the Statewide NPDES Permit issued by the State Water Resources Control Board (Order No. 2012-0011-DWQ, as amended by 2014-0077-DWQ). This permit regulates discharges from Caltrans-owned facilities, rights-of-way, and construction activities to protect surface waters from pollutants commonly associated with transportation infrastructure. The SWMP identifies procedures for planning, design, construction, and maintenance activities to ensure implementation of Best Management Practices (BMPs) that reduce or eliminate the discharge of pollutants to the maximum extent practicable.

Water Pollution Control Program (WPCP) Requirements

For construction projects that disturb less than one acre of soil and therefore do not require coverage under the Construction General Permit (CGP), the Caltrans SWMP requires the preparation of a Water Pollution Control Program (WPCP). A WPCP is a simplified stormwater compliance document that outlines the site-specific temporary BMPs to be implemented during construction to minimize erosion, sedimentation, and pollutant discharge. The WPCP must include:

- A project description and construction schedule
- Identification of potential pollutant sources
- A site map indicating drainage patterns and BMP locations
- Descriptions of applicable erosion control, sediment control, tracking control, and good housekeeping practices
- Inspection and maintenance procedures

WPCPs are reviewed and approved by Caltrans' Resident Engineer and must be implemented throughout the duration of the project. While not submitted to the Water Board, they are enforceable under Caltrans' Statewide Permit and may be audited by regulatory agencies.

Local

San Bernardino County Code

The California Buildings Standards Code (California Code of Regulations, Title 24) is a compilation of codes and standards for electrical, mechanical, plumbing, fire, design, and other structural features. The CBC is updated every three years with the latest advances in building technology and practices recommended by the International Code Council. Every local government is required by state law to adopt the CBC within 180 days of publication. The County has adopted the most recent 2016 update of the CBC. The 2019 triennial update to the CBC is being released and will be considered for adoption by the County. State law permits jurisdictions to amend state building codes to address local geographic, topographic, or climatic conditions. The California Building Standards Commission publishes all code amendments adopted by local agencies. The County amended the 2016 CBC for administrative provisions and included excavation

and grading requirements that were not in the original 2016 CBC. No other local amendments were made, although other cities in the county may have adopted more restrictive amendments. In addition to the Alquist-Priolo Earthquake Fault Zones designated by the State, the County has designated County Fault Hazard Zones for particular faults not addressed by the State. The County Fault Hazard Zones also average about a quarter mile in width around the surface traces of County-recognized active faults. In general, construction within a County Fault Hazard Zone requires a fault investigation prior to issuing grading and building permits. Title 8 of the County Code, Chapter 82.15.040 (a) seeks to prevent construction or major rehabilitation of structures used for human occupancy within 50 feet of an active fault. Chapter 82.15.040 (b) of the Code requires that structures used for critical facilities be located at least 150 feet from any active fault trace.

Geologic Setting

The Desert Regions comprise most of the Mojave Desert and part of the Basin and Range geomorphic provinces of California. The Desert Regions generally lie between 2,000 and 5,000 feet above mean sea level and are characterized by mountain ranges and hills of moderate relief that are partially buried and separated by broad alluvial basins. Mountain ranges and hills primarily consist of Mesozoic granitic and Mesozoic to Precambrian metamorphic rocks. Cenozoic sedimentary and volcanic rocks and landforms are also common.2 For example, basaltic lava flows and volcanic cinder cones near Pisgah and Amboy and the sedimentary Barstow formation in the Rainbow Basin are prominent features. The northernmost part of the Desert Regions is in the Basin and Range Province, which is characterized by mostly north-south-trending mountain ranges and valleys. Prominent active faults in the region include the San Andreas, Garlock, Landers-Kickapoo, Camp Rock-Emerson, Copper Mountain, Calico-Hidalgo, Helendale, Lenwood, Lockhart, Mesquite Lake, Pisgah-Bullion, Lavic Lake, Manix, North Frontal, Sky High Ranch, Old Woman Springs, Silver Reef, Johnson Valley, Ludlow, Cady, Cave Mountain, Red Pass, Blackwater, Mirage Valley, Kramer Hills, Mount General, Paradise, and Pinto Mountain Faults.

There are no Alquist-Priolo Fault Zones or County Fault Hazard Zones within a 100-mile radius of the Project site. The region of the Project site is in a Low Hazard zone of earthquake shaking potential.

4.7.2 Impact Analysis

a) i) Would the project directly or indirectly cause potential substantial adverse effects, including the risk of loss, injury, or death involving rupture of a known earthquake fault, as delineated on the most recent Alquist-Priolo Earthquake Fault Zoning Map issued by the State Geologist for the area or based on other substantial evidence of a known fault? Refer to Division of Mines and Geology Special Publication 42.

No Impact. Although the region is subject to seismic activity due to its location in Southern California, the Project does not involve the construction of habitable structures or new bridge foundations. The proposed improvements consist of roadway resurfacing, pavement expansion, and minor grading. These activities do not significantly increase the risk of fault rupture-related hazards.

The Project site is categorized as an Unevaluated Area under the California Geological Survey's (CGS) Earthquake Zones of Required Investigation (DOC 2024). According to the CGS, the Project site is not within an Earthquake Fault Zone. The parcel of land the Project site is on has not been evaluated by CGS for liquefaction hazards nor seismic landslide hazards.

According to the U.S Geological Survey (USGS), the closest faults to the Project site are the Chemehuevi graben faults located approximately 12.80 miles west of the Project and the Needles graben faults located 20 miles northeast of the Project site (USGS 2022). There are no active or potentially active faults, or Alquist-Priolo Earthquake Fault Zones that underlay the Project site.

Furthermore, the Project will comply with Caltrans Highway Design Manual (HDM) – Seismic Design Requirements, ensuring that road structures are designed to withstand seismic ground motions. Due the distance between the Project site and faults, and the use of Caltrans Seismic Design Requirements, there would be no impact related to the rupture of a known earthquake fault as depicted on the most recent Alquist-Priolo Earthquake Fault Zoning Map.

ii) Would the project directly or indirectly cause potential substantial adverse effects, including the risk of loss, injury, or death involving strong seismic ground-shaking?

No Impact. The Project site, like all of Southern California, is in a seismically active region. Ground shaking resulting from earthquakes associated with both nearby and more distant faults is likely to occur. The Project footprint is an existing roadway that would be undergoing improvements and widening. As discussed in a) above, the road construction will be approved and completed using southern California standards that take into account the need for seismic design elements. The proposed Project would not cause or exacerbate strong seismic ground shaking that would expose people or structures to significant risk of injury or loss of property; therefore, no impact would occur.

iii) Would the project directly or indirectly cause potential substantial adverse effects, including the risk of loss, injury, or death involving seismic-related ground failure, including liquefaction?

No Impact. According to the County's Geologic Hazard Overlays Map, the Project site is not located within or near an area with liquefaction susceptibility (County 2007). Additionally, all Project activities would be conducted in accordance with the County regulations and ordinances, pertaining to the mitigation of potential geologic and seismic impacts. Therefore, no impact would occur.

iv) Would the project directly or indirectly cause potential substantial adverse effects, including the risk of loss, injury, or death involving landslides?

No Impact. The strip of land comprising the Project area is relatively flat, with a slope of 1.4% along the roadway. According to the U.S. Landslide Inventory and Susceptibility Map and the County's Geologic Hazard Overlays Map, the Project site is not located on an area, nor adjacent to an area that is susceptible to landslides (USGS 2025; County 2007). Additionally, all Project activities would be conducted in accordance with County regulations and ordinances, pertaining to the mitigation of potential geologic and seismic impacts. Therefore, no impact would occur.

b) Would the project result in substantial soil erosion or the loss of topsoil?

Less Than Significant Impact. The Project site is in a flat desert region with minimal elevation change, reducing the risk of substantial soil erosion. The existing landscape consists of paved surfaces and compacted soils, limiting the presence of loose topsoil that could be displaced. The Project involves removal of existing asphalt concrete, pavement resurfacing, removal of vegetation, and minor grading, but does not include large-scale earthmoving, excavation, or slope alterations. Temporary soil disturbance may occur during construction, particularly in areas where pavement expansion will

occur. However, as described in Section 3.10, the Project will implement standard Best Management Practices (BMPs) under a prepared Water Pollution Control Program (WPCP) to prevent erosion, such as erosion control measures, stormwater pollution prevention, and dust suppression techniques.

Operational conditions of the Project site would be an impervious surface area that would not be prone to erosion or loss of topsoil; therefore, substantial on-site erosion and loss of topsoil would not occur. For these reasons, impacts related to erosion or loss of topsoil would be less than significant.

c) *Would the project be located on a geologic unit or soil that is unstable, or that would become unstable as a result of the project, and potentially result in on- or off-site landslide, lateral spreading, subsidence, liquefaction or collapse?*

No Impact. The soil type in the Project footprint is a combination of Chemehuevi, Rizzo, and Emptygun (USDA 2019). These soil types are comprised of gravelly sandy loam at shallow depths and extremely gravelly coarse sand at lower depths. These soil types are either classified as "Well Drained" or "Excessively Drained" and have low rates of runoff.

These soil characteristics indicate that the Project site is not prone to instability. The well-drained nature of the soils reduces the likelihood of liquefaction, lateral spreading, or collapse due to their low moisture retention. Additionally, the flat topography of the Project area minimizes the risk of landslides or subsidence.

The Project does not involve deep excavation or significant structural loads that could trigger instability. Furthermore, compliance with County grading requirements and California Building Code (CBC) standards will ensure that construction activities do not introduce instability risks. Therefore, there would be no impacts relating to on- or off-site landslides, lateral spreading, subsidence, liquefaction, or collapse.

d) *Would the project be located on expansive soil, as defined in Table 18-1-B of the Uniform Building Code (1994), creating substantial direct or indirect risks to life or property?*

No Impact. The Chemehuevi, Rizzo, and Emptygun soil types are well drained with rapid runoff and do not contain expansive properties (USDA 2019). Therefore, there would be no impacts associated with expansive soils creating substantial risk of life or property.

e) *Would the project have soils incapable of adequately supporting the use of septic tanks or alternative waste water disposal systems where sewers are not available for the disposal of waste water?*

No Impact. The Project is road widening and does not require the use of septic or wastewater disposal systems. There would be no impact associated with the disposal of wastewater.

f) *Would the project directly or indirectly destroy a unique paleontological resource or site or unique geologic feature?*

Less than Significant Impact. According to the Paleontological Resources Technical Report prepared for the Draft EIR of the San Bernardino Countywide Plan, the Project site is within a region with no paleontological sensitivity (County 2019). Furthermore, the Project would be partially occurring in previously disturbed land and would have a low excavation depth. No impacts to paleontological resources would occur.

4.8 GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS

8.	GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS. Would the project:	Potentially Significant Impact	Less than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
(a)	Generate greenhouse gas emissions, either directly or indirectly, that may have a significant impact on the environment?	☐	☐	☒	☐
(b)	Conflict with an applicable plan, policy, or regulation adopted for the purpose of reducing the emissions of greenhouse gases?	☐	☐	☒	☐

4.8.1 Environmental Setting

On June 2022, 2025, Vista Environmental prepared an Air Quality and Greenhouse Gas Emissions Technical Memorandum (Air Report) in support of the Proposed Project. The Air Report is included in Appendix A.

4.8.2 Impact Analysis

a) Would the project generate greenhouse gas emissions, either directly or indirectly, that may have a significant impact on the environment?

b) Would the project conflict with an applicable plan, policy, or regulation adopted for the purpose of reducing the emissions of greenhouse gases?

a&b) Less than Significant. The proposed Project would not generate greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, either directly or indirectly, that may have a significant impact on the environment. The purpose of the proposed turn pocket project is to improve traffic flow, enhance safety and meet increasing capacity demands. The proposed Project's ongoing operations would not generate any additional vehicle trips, as it would not require any additional road maintenance activities than what is already occurring with the existing roads. As such, no operational GHG emissions would be created from the proposed Project, and GHG emissions would only be created from construction activities.

The MDAQMD shares responsibility with CARB for ensuring that all state and federal GHG standards are achieved and maintained within its jurisdiction. The MDAQMD CEQA Guidelines provides a project level significance threshold of 100,000 tons of carbon dioxide equivalent (CO_2e) per year for both construction and operational activities. The MDAQMD developed this threshold in order to comply with the GHG emission reductions required by Assembly Bill (AB) 32. The Project's GHG emissions have been calculated with the CalEEMod model based on the construction parameters detailed above for air quality emissions. A summary of the results is shown below in Table 3-3 and the CalEEMod model run is provided is attached to Appendix A.

Table 3-3. Project Related Greenhouse Gas Annual Emissions

Construction Year	Greenhouse Gas Emissions (Metric Tons per Year)			
	CO_2	CH_4	N_2O	$CO2_e$
Year 2025	48.8	<0.01	<0.01	49.1
Year 2026	196	0.01	<0.01	197
Total Construction Emissions	244.8	0.01	<0.01	246.1
Amortized Construction Emissions[1] (30 Years)	8.16	<0.01	<0.01	8.20
MDAQMD Threshold				100,000
Exceed Thresholds?				**No**

Notes

[1] Construction emissions amortized over 30 years as recommended in the SCAQMD GHG Working Group on November 19, 2009.

Source: CalEEMod Version 2022.1

The data provided in Table 3-3 shows that the construction activities would create a total of 246.1 MTCO2e, which equates to 8.2 MTCO2e per year, when amortized over 30 years. Table 3-3 shows that the GHG emissions created from the proposed Project are within the MDAQMD's threshold of 100,000 MTCO2e per year. Therefore, a less than significant generation of greenhouse gas emissions would occur from development of the proposed Project. Impacts would be less than significant.

4.9 HAZARDS AND HAZARDOUS MATERIALS

9.	HAZARDS AND HAZARDOUS MATERIALS. Would the project:	Potentially Significant Impact	Less than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
(a)	Create a significant hazard to the public or the environment through the routine transport, use, or disposal of hazardous materials?	☐	☐	☒	☐
(b)	Create a significant hazard to the public or the environment through reasonably foreseeable upset and accident conditions involving the release of hazardous materials into the environment?	☐	☐	☒	☐
(c)	Emit hazardous emissions or handle hazardous or acutely hazardous materials, substances, or waste within one-quarter mile of an existing or proposed school?	☐	☐	☐	☒
(d)	Be located on a site which is included on a list of hazardous materials sites compiled pursuant to Government Code Section 65962.5 and, as a result, would it create a significant hazard to the public or the environment?	☐	☐	☐	☒

9.	HAZARDS AND HAZARDOUS MATERIALS. Would the project:	Potentially Significant Impact	Less than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
(e)	For a project located within an airport land use plan or, where such a plan had not been adopted, within 2 miles of a public airport or public use airport, would the project result in a safety hazard or excessive noise for people residing or working in the project area?	☐	☐	☐	☒
(f)	Impair implementation of or physically interfere with an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan?	☐	☐	☒	☐
(g)	Expose people or structures, either directly or indirectly, to a significant risk of loss, injury, or death involving wildland fires?	☐	☐	☒	☐

4.9.1 Environmental Setting

Regulatory Setting

Federal

Resource Conservation and Recovery Act

The Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA) of 1976 (42 USC. § 6901 et seq.) is the principal federal law that regulates the generation, management, and transportation of waste. Hazardous waste management includes the treatment, storage, or disposal of hazardous waste. The RCRA gave the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) the authority to control hazardous waste from "cradle to grave," that is, from generation to transportation, treatment, storage, and disposal, at active and future facilities. It does not address abandoned or historical sites. The RCRA also set forth a framework for managing nonhazardous wastes. Later amendments required phasing out land disposal of hazardous waste and added underground tanks storing petroleum and other hazardous substances.

Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act

The Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (CERCLA) of 1980 (42 USC § 9601 et seq.), commonly known as the Superfund, protects water, air, and land resources from the risks created by past chemical disposal practices such as abandoned and historical hazardous waste sites. It gave the EPA power to seek out the parties responsible for a release and ensure their cooperation in the cleanup. CERCLA also enabled the revision of the National Contingency Plan, which established the National Priority List (NPL) of sites, known as Superfund sites. CERCLA was amended by the Superfund Amendments and Reauthorization Act (SARA) in 1986 to continue cleanup activities.

Toxic Substances Control Act

The Toxic Substances Control Act (TSCA) of 1976 (15 USC § 2601 et seq.) gave the EPA the ability to track the 75,000 industrial chemicals produced or imported into the United States. The EPA repeatedly screens these chemicals; can require reporting or testing of any that may pose an environmental or human health hazard; and can ban the manufacture and import of chemicals that pose an unreasonable risk. The EPA

tracks the thousands of new chemicals each year with unknown or dangerous characteristics. The act supplements other federal statutes, including the Clean Air Act and the Toxics Release Inventory under EPCRA.

State

California Environmental Protection Agency

The California Environmental Protection Agency (Cal/EPA) was created in 1991, unifying California's environmental authority in a single cabinet-level agency and bringing the California Air Resources Board (Air Resources Board), State Water Resources Control Board, RWQCBs, California Department of Resources Recycling and Recovery (known as CalRecyle and formerly the Integrated Waste Management Board), Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC), Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment, and Department of Pesticide Regulation under one agency. These agencies were placed within the Cal/EPA "umbrella" for the protection of human health and the environment and to ensure the coordinated deployment of state resources. Its mission is to restore, protect, and enhance the environment, to ensure public health, environmental quality, and economic vitality.

Department of Toxic Substance Control

The DTSC is a department of Cal/EPA and is the primary agency in California that regulates hazardous waste, cleans-up existing contamination, and looks for ways to reduce the hazardous waste produced in California. The DTSC regulates hazardous waste in California primarily under the authority of the federal RCRA and the California Health and Safety Code (primarily Division 20, Chapters 6.5 through 10.6, and Title 22, Division 4.5). Other laws that affect hazardous waste are specific to handling, storage, transportation, disposal, treatment, reduction, cleanup, and emergency planning. Government Code Section 65962.5 (commonly referred to as the Cortese List) includes DTSC-listed hazardous waste facilities and sites, Department of Health Services (DHS) lists of contaminated drinking water wells, sites listed by the State Water Resources Control Board as having underground storage tank (UST) leaks and which have had a discharge of hazardous wastes or materials into the water or groundwater, and lists from local regulatory agencies of sites that have had a known migration of hazardous waste/material. Today, the Cortese list refers to many databases that record hazardous materials, including the Toxics Release Inventory (TRI), EnviroStor, and GeoTracker.

Regional Water Quality Control Board

The RWQCB is a department of Cal/EPA that oversees investigation and cleanup of sites including underground storage tanks where wastes have been discharged in order to protect the water quality of the state. The RWQCB regulates wastewater discharges to surface waters and to groundwater. They also regulate storm water discharges from construction, industrial, and municipal activities. The RWQCB is the lead regulatory agency for the Project site.

Hazardous Materials Transportation

Section 31303 of the California Vehicle Code and US Department of Transportation regulate hazardous materials transport. The California Highway Patrol and California Department of Transportation are the enforcement agencies. Cal OES provides emergency response services involving hazardous materials incidents.

Local

San Bernardino County Hazardous Materials Release Response Plans and Inventory Program

In the County, the Business Emergency/Contingency Plan (Business Plan) is also used to satisfy the contingency plan requirement for hazardous waste generators. Any business subject to any of the CUPA permits is required in the County to file a Business Emergency/Contingency Plan using the California Environmental Reporting System. This submission is used as the basis for the permit application. A new business going through the process of obtaining County planning or building approval is required to comply with the Business Emergency/Contingency Plan requirement prior to obtaining final certificate of occupancy and prior to bringing hazardous materials onto the property.

The quantities that trigger disclosure are based on the maximum quantity on site at any time excluding materials under active shipping papers or for direct retail sale to the public. The basic quantities are: hazardous materials at or exceeding 55 gallons, 500 pounds, or 200 cubic feet at any time in the course of a year; specified amounts of radioactives, and extremely hazardous substances above the threshold planning quantity.

Existing Conditions

There are no government-listed hazardous material sites within a 10 mile radius of the Project site (SWRCB 2025; DTSC 2025). There are no schools within a 10-mile radius of the Proposed Project. The closest school is Chemehuevi Valley Elementary School, located approximately 13 miles southeast of the Project site. The nearest airport is the Chemehuevi Valley Airport, which is approximately 12 miles southeast of the Project site. The Project is located in a Federal Responsibility Area and is classified as a Moderate Fire Hazard Severity Zone (County 2020d). The Project site is not located along a Hazardous Waste Route.

4.9.2 Impact Analysis

a) *Would the project create a significant hazard to the public or the environment through the routine transport, use, or disposal of hazardous materials?*

Less Than Significant Impact. The Project involves widening an existing road. Construction of the Project would require the use of hazardous materials. Hazardous materials that are used during construction (e.g., petroleum-based products, paints, solvents, sealers, and asphalt) for a short period of time would be transported, used, stored, and disposed of according to local, County, state, and federal regulations. Operations of the Project would not involve routine transport, use, or disposal of hazardous materials, or result in the release of hazardous materials into the environment. Therefore, hazards to the public or the environment through the routine transport, use, or disposal of hazardous materials would be less than significant.

b) *Would the project create a significant hazard to the public or the environment through reasonably foreseeable upset and accident conditions involving the release of hazardous materials into the environment?*

Less Than Significant Impact. Review of the EnviroStor and the GeoTracker database shows that there are no government-listed hazardous material sites within a 10 mile radius of the Project site (SWRCB 2025; DTSC 2025).

As previously stated in a) above, construction activities would involve the use of chemical agents, oils, solvents, paints, and other hazardous materials that are associated with construction activities. The amount of these chemicals present during construction is limited and would be in compliance with existing government regulations. Therefore, construction activities would not create a significant hazard to the public or the environment through reasonable foreseeable upset and accident conditions involving the release of hazardous materials into the environment. Operations would be similar to existing conditions; the road widening is to create more efficient traffic flow through the intersection. The Project would have a less than significant impact associated with creating significant hazards to the public or the environment through foreseeable upset and accident conditions involving the release of hazardous materials into the environment.

c) *Would the project emit hazardous emissions or handle hazardous or acutely hazardous materials, substances, or waste within one-quarter mile of an existing or proposed school?*

No Impact. There are no schools within a 10-mile radius of the Proposed Project. The closest school is Chemehuevi Valley Elementary School, located approximately 13 miles southeast of the Project site. Due to this distance, construction and operations of the Proposed Project would have no impacts associated with hazardous emissions, handling hazardous materials, or waste within 0.25 mile from a school.

d) *Would the project be located on a site which is included on a list of hazardous materials sites compiled pursuant to Government Code Section 65962.5 and, as a result, would it create a significant hazard to the public or the environment?*

No Impact. Review of the EnviroStor and the GeoTracker database shows that there are no government-listed hazardous material sites within a 10-mile radius of the Project site (SWRCB 2025; DTSC 2025). Therefore, implementation of the Proposed Project would not result in an impact associated with known hazardous materials sites.

e) *For a project located within an airport land use plan or, where such a plan had not been adopted, within 2 miles of a public airport or public use airport, would the project result in a safety hazard or excessive noise for people residing or working in the project area?*

No Impact. The nearest airport is the Chemehuevi Valley Airport, which is approximately 12 miles southeast of the Project site. This airport does not have an airport land use plan. As a result, there would be no impacts associated with excessive noise or safety hazards for people working on the Project site caused by an airport within 2 miles of the Project location.

f) *Would the project impair implementation of or physically interfere with an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan?*

Less Than Significant Impact. The Project site is subject to the County of San Bernardino Emergency Operations Plan (EOP) and Multi-Jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan.

During construction, traffic control would occur on both Lake Havasu Road and the US-95 segment. The Traffic Control plan will identify alternative routes during construction to effectively and safely move drivers through the Project site. The Traffic Control plan will be designed in accordance with the California Manual on Traffic Control Devices, Standard Specifications for Public Works Construction "Greenbook," and the County of San Bernardino Standards. Furthermore, the Traffic Control Plan shall be subject to review and approval by the San Bernardino County Department of Public Works. This

will ensure that there will be adequate emergency vehicle access throughout the intersection. In addition, all construction/maintenance vehicles and stationary equipment would be located off public roads and would not block emergency access routes.

Once operational, the Project will enhance emergency vehicle access through a widened lane and the addition of a left-turn pocket, improving traffic flow and ensuring quick and unimpeded passage for emergency vehicles. The Project is designed to work in tandem with existing emergency response infrastructure, minimizing any potential disruptions. Impacts would be less than significant.

g) *Would the project expose people or structures, either directly or indirectly, to a significant risk of loss, injury or death involving wildland fires?*

Less than Significant. The Project is widening a road in a relatively flat intersection in an undeveloped area. The Project is in a desert environment with dry vegetation and high temperatures, which can contribute to wildfire risk. The Project site is classified as a Federal Responsibility Area (FRA) within a Moderate Fire Hazard Severity Zone (County 2020d). Although the Project is located on desert terrain with spare vegetation, there are no historical records of fires occurring within the Project vicinity (CalFire 2023). The removal of vegetation along the expansion area would further reduce the risk of wildfire. The Project would not alter existing land uses, introduce new habitable structures, or significantly increase human presence or ignition sources. Fire risks and the level of emergency response readiness during operations will be similar to existing conditions. Impacts would be less than significant.

4.10 HYDROLOGY AND WATER QUALITY

10.	HYDROLOGY AND WATER QUALITY. Would the project:	Potentially Significant Impact	Less than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
(a)	Violate any water quality standards or waste discharge requirements or otherwise substantially degrade surface or ground water quality?	☐	☐	☒	☐
(b)	Substantially decrease groundwater supplies or interfere substantially with groundwater recharge such that the project may impede sustainable groundwater management of the basin?	☐	☐	☒	☐
(c)	Substantially alter the existing drainage pattern of the site or area, including through the alteration of the course of a stream or river or through the addition of impervious surfaces, in a manner which would:	☐	☐	☒	☐
	i) Result in substantial erosion or siltation on- or off-site;	☐	☐	☒	☐
	ii) Substantially increase the rate or amount of surface runoff in a manner which would result in flood on- or off-site;	☐	☐	☒	☐
	iii) Create or contribute runoff water which would exceed the capacity of existing or planned stormwater drainage systems or provide substantial additional sources of polluted runoff; or	☐	☐	☒	☐
	iv) Impede or redirect flood flows?	☐	☐	☒	☐

10.	HYDROLOGY AND WATER QUALITY. Would the project:	Potentially Significant Impact	Less than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
(d)	In flood hazard, tsunami, or seiche zones, risk release of pollutants due to project inundation?	☐	☐	☐	☒
(e)	Conflict with or obstruct implementation of a water quality control plan or sustainable groundwater management plan?	☐	☐	☒	☐

4.10.1 Environmental Setting

Regulatory Setting

Federal

Clean Water Act

The federal Water Pollution Control Act (or Clean Water Act [CWA]) (33 USC section 1251 et seq.) is the principal statute governing water quality and regulating discharges of pollutants into the waters of the United States. It gives the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) authority to implement pollution control programs, such as setting wastewater standards for industry. The statute's goal is to regulate discharges and to restore, maintain, and preserve the integrity of the nation's waters. The CWA regulates direct and indirect discharge of pollutants; sets water quality standards for all contaminants in surface waters; and makes it unlawful for any person to discharge any pollutant from a point source into navigable waters unless a permit is obtained under its provisions. The CWA mandates permits for wastewater and stormwater discharges; requires states to establish site-specific water quality standards for navigable bodies of water; and regulates other activities that affect water quality, such as dredging and the filling of wetlands. The CWA funds the construction of sewage treatment plants and recognizes the need for planning to address nonpoint sources of pollution. Section 402 of the CWA requires a permit for all point source (a discernible, confined, and discrete conveyance, such as a pipe, ditch, or channel) discharges of any pollutant (except dredge or fill material) into waters of the United States.

National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System

Under the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) program (under Section 402 of the CWA), all facilities that discharge pollutants from any point source into waters of the United States must have a NPDES permit. The term "pollutant" broadly applies to any type of industrial, commercial, residential municipal, and agricultural waste discharged into water. Point sources can be publicly owned treatment works (POTWs), industrial facilities, and urban runoff. (The NPDES program addresses certain agricultural activities, but the majority are considered nonpoint sources and are exempt from NPDES regulation.) Direct sources discharge directly to receiving waters, and indirect sources discharge to POTWs, which in turn discharge to receiving waters. Under the national program, NPDES permits are issued only for direct point-source discharges. NPDES issues two basic permit types: individual and general. Also, the EPA has recently focused on integrating the NPDES program further into watershed planning and permitting. All construction sites one acre or more in size must file for and obtain an NPDES permit. Another measure, Phase I Final Rule, requires an operator (such as a city) of a regulated municipal separate storm sewer system (MS4) to develop, implement, and enforce a program to reduce pollutants

in post-construction runoff. The San Bernardino County Public Works Department enforces conditions of the MS4 NPDES permit on development and redevelopment projects in the County's jurisdiction.

State

Porter-Cologne Water Quality Act

The Porter-Cologne Water Quality Act (Water Code sections 13000 et seq.) is the basic water quality control law for California. Under this Act, the State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB) has primary responsibility for coordination and control of water quality, and the EPA has delegated authority to issue NPDES permits to the SWRCB. The state is divided into nine Regional Water Quality Control Boards (RWQCBs) who, with the SWRCB, regulate, protect, and administer water quality in each region. Each regional board adopts a Water Quality Control Plan or Basin Plan that includes the differences in water quality throughout the region, the beneficial uses of specific ground and surface waters, and local water quality conditions and problems. The County spans portions of three RWQCB regions: Santa Ana, South Lahontan, and Colorado River. The water quality control plan for the Santa Ana River Basin was updated in 2016; the plan for the South Lahontan Region was issued in 1995 and included amendments through 2016; and the plan for the Colorado River Basin was updated in 2019.

Colorado River Basin RWQCB Area

There are no regulated municipal separate storm sewer systems in the unincorporated County areas in the Colorado River Basin RWQCB. Development within this area is not subject to any MS4 permits but do need to meet the requirements of the Industrial General Permit and the Construction General Permit, as needed.

Existing Project Area Conditions

The Project site is within a 100-year State Department of Water Resources (DWR) Awareness Zone. DWR 100-Year Flood Awareness areas are identified using approximate assessment procedures. The areas are mapped as flood-prone areas without specific flood depths and other flood hazard data.

4.10.2 Impact Analysis

a) Would the project violate any water quality standards or waste discharge requirements, or otherwise substantially degrade surface or ground water quality?

Less Than Significant Impact. During construction, chemicals, liquid products, petroleum products, and concrete-related waste may be spilled or leaked, potentially entering storm runoff and affecting receiving waters. The Project would be required to comply with the Caltrans Stormwater Management Program (SW Program), which provides statewide policy direction, technical and regulatory information, guidance documents, specifications, and funding to integrate appropriate stormwater control activities (Caltrans 2025). The SW Program also provides water quality monitoring, best management practices development along with implementing guidance and tools.

Per the Caltrans Stormwater Quality Handbooks Project Planning and Design Guide, a component of the SW Program, Caltrans projects that disturb a soil area of less than one acre do not require a Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP), but they do require preparation and implementation of a Water Pollution Control Program (WPCP) (Caltrans 2023). Per this requirement, a qualified

professional shall prepare a WPCP that will outline site conditions, potential pollutants, and Best Management Practices (BMPs) to minimize erosion, sedimentation, and water quality impacts. BMPs, such as soil watering, soil cover of inactive areas, gravel bags, and fiber rolls, will be implemented throughout construction. Compliance with the WPCP ensures that stormwater runoff meets water quality standards set by the Colorado River RWQCB and other regulatory agencies.

Operational conditions in the Project footprint would be similar to existing conditions, with a minimal increase in impervious surfaces in the expansion area. Therefore, impacts associated with violating water quality standards, waste discharge requirements or degradation of surface or groundwater quality would be less than significant.

b) *Would the project substantially decrease groundwater supplies or interfere substantially with groundwater recharge such that the project may impede sustainable groundwater management of the basin?*

Less Than Significant Impact. The proposed roadway widening would result in a minor increase in impervious surface area. If the entire expansion area were converted to impervious surface, it would total approximately 0.9 acre. However, this increase is negligible and would not substantially decrease groundwater supplies or interfere with groundwater recharge.

The Chemehuevi Groundwater Basin underlies the Project site. This basin is deemed to be a "very low" priority under the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA), indicating that it is not significantly stressed or at risk of overdraft (SWRCB 2924). Additionally, the Project is not expected to require substantial groundwater withdrawals, and no direct groundwater extraction is proposed as part of construction or long-term operations. A minimal amount of water will be used on-site during construction for dust control, in compliance with Best Management Practices (BMPs). This water will be stored in a tank and transported to the site.

As noted in Section (a), the existing stormwater management system will remain unchanged. Therefore, the Project would not alter natural infiltration patterns or impede groundwater recharge. Given these factors, the Project would not significantly impact groundwater availability or sustainable groundwater management in the basin. Therefore, impacts are considered less than significant.

c) i) *Would the project substantially alter the existing drainage pattern of the site or area, including through the alteration of the course of a stream or river or through the addition of impervious surfaces, in a manner which would result in substantial erosion or siltation on- or off-site?*

Less Than Significant Impact. The proposed Project would result in a minor increase in impervious surfaces, but it would not alter the existing drainage pattern in the area. As noted in Section 3.4, two potentially jurisdictional water features are within the Project boundary, but are outside the area of permanent impact. The stormwater management system will remain unchanged, ensuring that runoff patterns remain consistent with current conditions.

During construction, activities such as removal of concrete, pavement, and vegetation, as well as excavation, could temporarily expose soil, increasing the potential for erosion and sedimentation. However, preparation and implementation of a WPCP and the limited extent of ground disturbance would minimize these effects. Best Management Practices (BMPs), such as erosion control measures and sediment containment, will further reduce potential impacts.

Once construction is complete, the Project site will consist of impervious surfaces, which are not susceptible to erosion. As a result, the Project would not cause substantial on-site or off-site erosion or siltation, and impacts would be less than significant.

ii) Would the project substantially alter the existing drainage pattern of the site or area, including through the alteration of the course of a stream or river or through the addition of impervious surfaces, in a manner which would substantially increase the rate or amount of surface runoff in a manner which would result in flooding on- or off-site?

Less Than Significant Impact. During construction activities, soil would be compacted, and drainage patterns would be temporarily altered during grading and other construction activities. In addition, construction activities would be temporary, and the disturbed ground would be restored for operations.

The Proposed Project is within a 100-year DWR Flood Awareness Zone. However, the proposed Project would not alter the existing on-site drainage patterns. The increase in impervious surface area (0.90 acre) would minimally increase storm water runoff compared to existing conditions given the Project site is located adjacent to vast, undeveloped land. Therefore, the proposed Project would not exceed the existing capacity of the downstream storm drain system or result in off-site flooding. Construction and operational impacts related to on- or off-site flooding would be less than significant.

iii) Would the project substantially alter the existing drainage pattern of the site or area, including through the alteration of the course of a stream or river or through the addition of impervious surfaces, in a manner which would create or contribute runoff water which would exceed the capacity of existing or planned stormwater drainage systems or provide substantial additional sources or polluted runoff?

Less Than Significant Impact. As discussed previously, construction of the proposed Project has the potential to introduce pollutants to the storm drainage system from erosion, siltation, and accidental spills. However, as discussed above, because of the small amount of ground disturbance during construction, Project construction activities have a low potential to impact water quality and would not result in a substantial increase in the rate or amount of storm water runoff.

Per Caltrans requirements described above, the Project proponent shall prepare and implement a WPCP that would serve to reduce impacts associated with stormwater drainage systems and polluted runoff to less than significant levels. Therefore, Project construction would not exceed the capacity of existing or planned storm water drainage systems or provide substantial additional sources of polluted runoff.

The proposed Project would maintain the existing drainage pattern on the Project site during operations. The proposed Project would increase the impervious surface area by 0.90 acres, which would not create a significant increase in the volume of storm water runoff and transport pollutants to receiving waters compared to existing conditions. The Project operations would not result in new source pollutants in storm water runoff because it is a road widening project that is improving the function and safety of an intersection, and not promoting an increase of traffic. Therefore, Project operations would not substantially increase the amount of pollutants transported by storm water runoff to receiving waters. As a result, impacts related to the creation or contribution of storm water runoff that would exceed the capacity of existing or planned storm

water drainage systems or the provision of substantial additional sources of polluted runoff would be less than significant.

iv) *Would the project substantially alter the existing drainage pattern of the site or area, including through the alteration of the course of a stream or river or through the addition of impervious surfaces, in a manner which would impede or redirect flood flows?*

Less Than Significant. The Proposed Project is within a 100-year DWR Flood Awareness Zone. However, the proposed Project would not alter the existing on-site flood flow patterns. Additionally, the proposed Project area is not located within a Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) identified 100-year flood hazard area (FEMA 2023). Operations of the Project would not place improvements or permanent structures directly within a 100-year floodplain, thus the Project would not impede or redirect flood flows. Therefore, a less than significant impact would occur related to impeding or redirecting of flood flows.

d) *Would the project, in flood hazard, tsunami, or seiche zones, risk release of pollutants due to project inundation?*

No Impact. The Project footprint and staging areas are not located near a large body of water that would be subject to seiches or tsunamis. The Pacific Ocean is located approximately 200 miles west of the Project site and Havasu Lake is located approximately 15 miles southeast of the Project site. According to the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Flood Map Service Center, the Project is not located within a special flood hazard area and is designated as Zone D. Zone D is designated for areas where there are possible but undetermined flood hazards (FEMA 2023). Therefore, no impacts related to inundation from seiche and tsunami would occur. No impacts would occur.

e) *Would the project conflict with or obstruct implementation of a water quality control plan or sustainable groundwater management plan?*

Less Than Significant Impact. The Project is within the jurisdiction of the Colorado River Basin Regional Water Quality Control Board (RWQCB). The Colorado River Basin RWQCB adopted a Water Quality Control Plan (Basin Plan). The Basin Plan establishes water quality standards for the ground and surface waters of the region. It also includes an implementation plan describing the actions that are necessary to achieve and maintain the water quality standards. As discussed in a), because of the small amount of ground disturbance during construction, Project construction has a less than significant impact to water quality. Because the Project would only slightly increase the total impervious surface area on the Project site, storm water runoff during operation would remain similar to existing conditions. The proposed Project would not result in water quality impacts that would conflict with the Basin Plan. Impacts associated or conflicting with a Water Quality Control Plan would be less than significant.

The Proposed Project is located within the Chemehuevi Valley Groundwater Basin. According to the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA) Status Map, the Project site is not located on a high or medium priority groundwater basin subject to the SGMA (SWRCB 2024). Therefore, compliance with the SGMA is not required. Thus, the Project would not conflict with or obstruct the implementation of a water quality control plan or a sustainable groundwater management plan. Impacts would be less than significant.

4.11 LAND USE AND PLANNING

11.	LAND USE/PLANNING Would the project:	Potentially Significant Impact	Less than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
(a)	Physically divide an established community?	☐	☐	☐	☒
(b)	Cause a significant environmental impact due to a conflict with any land use plan, policy, or regulation adopted for the purpose of avoiding or mitigating an environmental effect?	☐	☐	☒	☐

4.11.1 Environmental Setting

Regulatory Setting

State Planning Law

State planning law (California Government Code Section 65300) requires every county in California to adopt a comprehensive, long-term general plan for physical development of the county. A general plan should consist of an integrated and internally consistent set of goals and policies that are grouped by topic into a set of elements and are guided by a countywide vision. State law requires that a general plan address nine elements or topics (land use, circulation, housing, conservation, open space, noise, safety, climate adaptation and resiliency, and environmental justice), but allows some discretion on the arrangement and content. Additionally, each of the specific and applicable requirements in the state planning law should be examined to determine if there are environmental issues within the county that a general plan should address. The San Bernardino Countywide Plan was adopted in 2020, replacing the previously adopted 2007 General Plan.

General Plan

Policy Plan

The following are relevant policies of the Countywide Plan that are designed to reduce potential adverse impacts related to land use by addressing development patterns and use compatibility.

Policy LU-2.1 **Compatibility with existing uses**. We require that new development is located, scaled, buffered, and designed to minimize negative impacts on existing conforming uses and adjacent neighborhoods. We also require that new residential developments are located, scaled, buffered, and designed so as to not hinder the viability and continuity of existing conforming nonresidential development

Policy LU-2.3 **Compatibility with natural environment**. We require that new development is located, scaled, buffered, and designed for compatibility with the surrounding natural environment and biodiversity.

Policy LU-2.6 **Coordination with adjacent entities**. We require that new and amended development projects notify and coordinate with adjacent local, state, and federal entities to maximize

land use compatibility, inform future planning and implementation, and realize mutually beneficial outcomes.

Policy TM-2.1 **Context sensitive approach**. We maintain and periodically update required roadway cross sections that prioritize multi-modal systems inside mobility focus areas (based on community context), and vehicular capacity on roadways outside of mobility focus areas (based on regional context).

Policy TM-5.5 **Countywide truck routes**. We support SBCTA's establishment of regional truck routes that efficiently distribute regional truck traffic while minimizing impacts on residents. We support funding through the RTP to build adequate truck route infrastructure.

Existing Conditions

The North Desert region includes large swaths of federally administered lands, including the Mojave National Preserve, the southern end of Death Valley National Park, portions of the Mojave Desert, and several military installations. Approximately 2 percent of the region is developed. Overall, the most common land use is undeveloped (96 percent) followed by military installations (1 percent), rural residential (1 percent) single-family residential (1 percent), and transportation, communications and utilities (1 percent) . In unincorporated areas the most common land use in the North Desert region is undeveloped (97 percent), followed by rural residential (0.8 percent), military installations (0.6 percent), and transportation, communications, and utilities (0.6 percent).

4.11.2 Impact Analysis

a) Would the project physically divide an established community?

No Impact. The Project involves widening an existing road and has no potential to divide an established community. All existing land uses near the project limits would continue to be accessible via current means. Furthermore, there are no established communities adjacent to the proposed Project. The Project site is located in an unincorporated part of the County that has no residential development in the immediate area. No impacts related to physically dividing an established community would occur.

b) Would the project cause a significant environmental impact due to a conflict with any land use plan, policy, or regulation adopted for the purpose of avoiding or mitigating an environmental effect?

Less Than Significant Impact. Although the road widening project would not conflict with any land use plan, policy, or regulation, the Project would include minor encroachment (approximately 4 feet by 3,000 feet) into Bureau of Land Management (BLM) right-of-way. Land use impacts associated with this federal land will be addressed in a separate NEPA document prepared by a separate agency.

For CEQA purposes, the Project would not conflict with any applicable land use plan, policy, or regulation of an agency with jurisdiction over the Project adopted for the purpose of avoiding or mitigating an environmental effect. The proposed road widening and left-turn pocket aims to reduce idling of vehicles along the US-95 and will not increase traffic counts post-construction. The Project site is designated as RC under the San Bernardino Countywide Plan. While the RC designation emphasizes open space and environmental preservation, it has previously accommodated development of the existing US-95 roadway. Therefore, the proposed widening of a US-95 roadway

segment is consistent with the established and ongoing use of the land and does not represent a new or incompatible land use. As such, the Project would not conflict with any applicable land use plan or regulation, and impacts would be less than significant.

4.12 MINERAL RESOURCES

12.	MINERAL RESOURCES Would the project:	Potentially Significant Impact	Less than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
(a)	Result in the loss of availability of a known mineral resource that would be of value to the region and the residents of the state?	☐	☐	☐	☒
(b)	Result in the loss of availability of a locally-important mineral resource recovery site delineated on a local general plan, specific plan or other land use plan?	☐	☐	☐	☒

4.12.1 Environmental Setting

Regulatory Setting

Surface Mining and Reclamation Act: California Public Resources Code Sections 2710 et seq.

The Surface Mining and Reclamation Act of 1975 (SMARA) is the primary regulatory framework for mining in the State. It delegates specific regulatory authority to local jurisdictions. The act requires the state geologist (California Geological Survey) to identify important mineral deposits in the state threatened by land uses that would be incompatible with future extraction and classify them into mineral resource zones. Local jurisdictions are required to enact specific procedures to guide mineral conservation and extraction at identified sites and to incorporate mineral resource management policies (MRMPs) into their general plans.

Executive Order 13817, Federal Strategy to Ensure Secure and Reliable Supplies of Critical Minerals

President's Executive Order No. 13817 instructed the Secretaries of Interior and Defense to identify and publish a list of critical minerals, including rare earths, then develop a strategy to reduce the United States' reliance on other countries to supply these increasingly important ingredients to America's defensive and economic security. The United States Department of Commerce released "A federal strategy to ensure secure and reliable supplies of critical minerals," an interagency report that outlines a government-wide action plan to ensure the United States has secure and reliable supplies of critical minerals. According to the Department of Commerce, the United States is dependent on imports for more than 50 percent of domestic demand for 29 of the 35 minerals named on the US Geological Survey (USGS) critical list. In addition, the U.S. lacks any domestic production for 14 of the minerals and does not have domestic access to processing and manufacturing capabilities for many. The Mountain Pass Mine was once the world's leading supplier of rare earth minerals, but China began to dominate the market in the 1990s. Mountain Pass has focused on achieving greater autonomy with a $1.7 billion separations process system that would allow it to refine and make rare earth products available for customers outside of China.

Senate Bill 1, Road Repair and Accountability Act

Senate Bill 1 (SB-1), the Road Repair and Accountability Act of 2017, was signed into law on April 28, 2017. This California legislation is projected to invest $54 billion over the next decade to fix roads, freeways, and bridges in communities across the state. These funds will be split equally between state and local investments. A number of projects are planned and already underway within the County.

State Mining & Geology Board

The State Mining and Geology Board (SMGB) provides professional expertise and serves as a regulatory, policy, and hearing body representing the state's interest in the development, utilization, and conservation of mineral resources, the reclamation of mined lands, and the development and dissemination of geologic and seismic hazard information. The nine-member SMGB operates within the Department of Conservation and is granted certain autonomous responsibilities and obligations under several statutes, including the Alquist-Priolo Earthquake Fault Zoning Act, the Seismic Hazards Mapping Act, and the Surface Mining and Reclamation Act.

Division of Mine Reclamation

The Division of Mine Reclamation (DMR) provides a measure of oversight for local governments as they administer SMARA within their respective jurisdictions. DMR may provide comments to lead agencies on a mining operation's reclamation plan and financial assurance and, jointly with SMGB, is charged with administering actions that encourage SMARA compliance. The primary focus is on existing mining operations and reclaiming mined lands to a usable and safe condition that is readily adaptable for alternative land uses. Issues related to abandoned legacy mines are addressed in the Abandoned Mine Lands program.

California Geological Survey

The California Geological Survey (CGS) provides objective geologic expertise and information about California's diverse nonfuel mineral resources, including their related hazards, through maps, reports, and other data products to assist governmental agencies, mining companies, consultants, and the public in recognizing, developing, and protecting important mineral resources.

Mineral Classification and Designation

Classification is the process of identifying lands containing significant mineral deposits. Designation is the formal recognition by the SMGB, after consultation with lead agencies and other interested parties, of areas containing mineral deposits of regional or statewide significance.

The objective of classification and designation processes is to ensure, through appropriate lead agency policies and procedures, that strategic mineral deposits of statewide or of regional significance are available when needed.

The California Geological Survey Mineral Resources Program provides information about California's nonfuel mineral resources. The Mineral Resources Project classifies lands throughout the state that contain regionally significant mineral resources as mandated by SMARA. Nonfuel mineral resources include metals such as gold, silver, iron, and copper; industrial minerals such as boron compounds, rare-

earth elements, clays, limestone, gypsum, salt, and dimension stone; and construction aggregates, including sand, gravel, and crushed stone. Building and infrastructure development generally results in a demand for minerals, especially construction aggregates. Urban expansion over prime deposits and conflicts between mining and other incompatible land uses throughout California led to SMARA's guidelines for classification and designation of mineral lands, which require all cities and counties to incorporate MRMPs into their general plans and approval by the State Mining and Geology Board. The classification process has developed Production-Consumption (P-C) region boundaries based on identification of active aggregate operations (production) and the market areas served (consumption). The PC regional boundaries are modified to include only the parts of the region that are urbanized or are urbanizing and are classified for their aggregate resource significance. An aggregate resource appraisal further evaluates the presence or absence of important sand, gravel and dimension stone deposits that are suitable sources of construction aggregate.

The classification and designation of these mineral resources is a joint effort of the state and the local governments. It is based on geologic factors and requires that the State Geologist classify the mineral resources area as one of the four Mineral Resource Zones (MRZs), Scientific Resource Zones (SZ), or Identified Resource Areas (IRAs), described below.

- **MRZ-1**: Areas where adequate geologic information indicates that no significant mineral deposits are present, or where it is judged that little likelihood exists for their presence.
- **MRZ-2a**: Areas underlain by mineral deposits where geologic data show that significant measured or indicated resources are present.
- **MRZ-2b**: Areas underlain by mineral deposits where geologic information indicates that significant inferred resources are present.
- **MRZ-3a**: Areas containing known mineral deposits that may qualify as mineral resources
- **MRZ-3b**: Areas containing inferred mineral deposits that may qualify as mineral resources.
- **MRZ-4:** Areas where geologic information does not rule out either the presence or absence of mineral resources (SMGB 2019).
- **SZ Areas**: Contain unique or rare occurrences of rocks, minerals, or fossils that are of outstanding scientific significance.
- **IRA Areas**: County- or state-identified areas where production and information indicates that significant minerals are present

Existing Conditions

The Project site is within a region classified as MRZ 4 (DOC 1995).

4.12.2 Impact Analysis

a) Would the project result in the loss of availability of a known mineral resource that would be of value to the region and the residents of the state?

No Impact. According to maps produced by the California Department of Conservation (DOC), the Project site is classified as MRZ 4, which defines areas where geologic information does not rule out either the presence or absence of mineral resources (DOC 1995).

According to the San Bernardino County Countywide Plan, the Project site is not in a Mineral Resource Zone 2 or 3, thus it is not identified as an area likely containing significant mineral resources (County 2020a). Additionally, the Project does not involve extensive grading or excavation that would preclude the extraction of any potential mineral resources in the future. Operations of the Project will not change the existing usage of the site as a roadway. As a result, the proposed Project would not result in the loss of availability of a known mineral resource that would be of value to the region and the residents of the state. No impact would occur.

b) Would the project result in the loss of availability of a locally-important mineral resource recovery site delineated on a local general plan, specific plan or other land use plan?

No Impact. As noted in Section (a), the San Bernardino Countywide Plan does not identify the Project site as a significant mineral resource deposit area. Therefore, the Project would not result in the loss of availability of a locally important mineral resource recovery site as delineated in any local general plan, specific plan, or other land use plan.

4.13 NOISE

13.	NOISE Would the project result in:	Potentially Significant Impact	Less than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
(a)	Generation of a substantial temporary or permanent increase in ambient noise levels in the vicinity of the project in excess of standards established in the local general plan or noise ordinance, or applicable standards of other agencies?	☐	☐	☒	☐
(b)	Generation of excessive groundborne vibration or groundborne noise levels?	☐	☐	☒	☐
(c)	For a project located within the vicinity of a private airstrip or an airport land use plan or, where such a plan has not been adopted, within two miles of a public airport or public use airport, would the project expose people residing or working in the project area to excessive noise levels?	☐	☐	☐	☒

4.13.1 Environmental Setting

Noise Regulatory Setting

The San Bernardino County, CA Code of Ordinances details Noise Standards for Stationary Noise Sources below in Table 3-4.

Table 3-4. Noise Standards for Stationary Noise Sources

Affected Land Uses (Receiving Noise)	*7:00 a.m. - 10:00 p.m. Leq*	*10:00 p.m. - 7:00 a.m. Leq*
Residential	55 dB(A)	45 dB(A)
Professional Services	55dB(A)	55 dB(A)
Other Commercial	60 dB(A)	60 dB(A)
Industrial	70 dB(A)	70 dB(A)
Leq = (Equivalent Energy Level). The sound level corresponding to a steady-state sound level containing the same total energy as a time-varying signal over a given sample period, typically one, eight or 24 hours.		
dB(A) = (A-weighted Sound Pressure Level). The sound pressure level, in decibels, as measured on a sound level meter using the A-weighting filter network. The A-weighting filter de-emphasizes the very low and very high frequency components of the sound, placing greater emphasis on those frequencies within the sensitivity range of the human ear.		
Ldn = (Day-Night Noise Level). The average equivalent A-weighted sound level during a 24-hour day obtained by adding 10 decibels to the hourly noise levels measured during the night (from 10:00 p.m. to 7:00 a.m.). In this way Ldn takes into account the lower tolerance of people for noise during nighttime periods.		
Source: San Bernardino County. (n.d.). *San Bernardino County Code of Ordinances § 83.01.080: Noise.* San Bernardino County Code of Ordinances. Available at: https://codelibrary.amlegal.com/codes/sanbernardino/latest/sanberncty_ca/0-0-0-169073		

The San Bernardino County, CA Code of Ordinances details Noise Standards for Adjacent Mobile Noise Sources below in Table 3-5.

Table 3-5. Noise Standards for Adjacent Mobile Noise Sources

Land Use		*Ldn (or CNEL) dB(A)*	
Categories	**Uses**	**Interior[1]**	**Exterior[2]**
Residential	Single and multi-family, duplex, mobile homes	45	60[3]
Commercial	Hotel, motel, transient housing	45	60[3]
	Commercial retail, bank, restaurant	50	N/A
	Office building, research and development, professional offices	45	65
	Amphitheater, concert hall, auditorium, movie theater	45	N/A
Institutional/ Public	Hospital, nursing home, school classroom, religious institution, library	45	65
Open Space	Park	N/A	65

Land Use	*Ldn (or CNEL) dB(A)*
Notes:	
(1): The indoor environment shall exclude bathrooms, kitchens, toilets, closets and corridors.	
(2): The outdoor environment shall be limited to: · Hospital/office building patios · Hotel and motel recreation areas · Mobile home parks · Multi-family private patios or balconies · Park picnic areas · Private yard of single-family dwellings · School playgrounds	
(3) An exterior noise level of up to 65 dB(A) (or CNEL) shall be allowed provided exterior noise levels have been substantially mitigated through a reasonable application of the best available noise reduction technology, and interior noise exposure does not exceed 45 dB(A) (or CNEL) with windows and doors closed. Requiring that windows and doors remain closed to achieve an acceptable interior noise level shall necessitate the use of air conditioning or mechanical ventilation.	
CNEL = (Community Noise Equivalent Level). The average equivalent A-weighted sound level during a 24-hour day, obtained after addition of approximately five decibels to sound levels in the evening from 7:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m. and ten decibels to sound levels in the night from 10:00 p.m. to 7:00 a.m.	
Source: San Bernardino County. (n.d.). *San Bernardino County Code of Ordinances § 83.01.080: Noise.* San Bernardino County Code of Ordinances. Available at: https://codelibrary.amlegal.com/codes/sanbernardino/latest/sanberncty_ca/0-0-0-169073	

The County of San Bernardino, CA County Code of Ordinances *Section 83.01.080: Noise* indicates that temporary construction, maintenance, repair, or demolition activities between 7:00 a.m. and 7:00 p.m., except Sundays and Federal holidays are exempt from the regulations of this Section.

Vibration Regulatory Setting

The County of San Bernardino County, CA Code of Ordinances *Section 83.01.090 Vibration* is detailed below:

(a) *Vibration Standard.* No ground vibration shall be allowed that can be felt without the aid of instruments at or beyond the lot line, nor shall any vibration be allowed which produces a particle velocity greater than or equal to two-tenths inches per second measured at or beyond the lot line.

(b) *Vibration Measurement.* Vibration velocity shall be measured with a seismograph or other instrument capable of measuring and recording displacement and frequency, particle velocity, or acceleration. Readings shall be made at points of maximum vibration along any lot line next to a parcel within a residential, commercial and industrial land use zoning district.

(c) *Exempt Vibrations.* The following sources of vibration shall be exempt from the regulations of this Section.

(1) Motor vehicles not under the control of the subject use.

(2) Temporary construction, maintenance, repair, or demolition activities between 7:00 a.m. and 7:00 p.m., except Sundays and Federal holidays.

4.13.2 Impact Analysis

a) Would the project result in generation of a substantial temporary or permanent increase in ambient noise levels in the vicinity of the project in excess of standards established in the local general plan or noise ordinance, or applicable standards of other agencies?

Less Than Significant Impact. As noted above, The County of San Bernardino, CA County Code of Ordinances Section *83.01.080: Noise* indicates that temporary construction, maintenance, repair, or demolition activities between 7:00 a.m. and 7:00 p.m., except Sundays and Federal holidays are exempt from noise regulations. The construction activities would comply with the noise timeframes permitted by the County. Although there would be an increase in noise in the area, the noise would be temporary - limited to the duration of construction. The nearest noise receptors would be residences located within the Chemehuevi Reservation approximately 12 miles east of the Project site.

Typical construction equipment emits noise levels of approximately 85 to 90 dBA at 50 feet (FHWA 2006). Noise from such sources attenuates at a rate of approximately 6 dBA per doubling of distance in open space. Given that the nearest sensitive receptors - residences on the Chemehuevi Indian Reservation - are located approximately 12 miles (over 63,000 feet) east of the Project site, the estimated noise levels at that distance would be reduced to less than 30 dBA, which is below ambient rural background levels and imperceptible to the human ear (Caltrans 2013). Therefore, construction of the Project would not create noise in excess of established standards in the County.

According to the San Bernardino Countywide Plan Land Use Map, the Project site is within Open Space land use (County 2020b). There are no noise receptors in the vicinity that would be impacted by traffic. The Project would improve the efficiency and safety of the intersection by reducing the idling of vehicles waiting to turn left onto Havasu Lake Rd. As detailed in Table 3-5, the exterior noise threshold for adjacent mobile noise sources is 65 dBA. The only operational noise impact anticipated is traffic noise. Implementation of the Proposed Project would not increase traffic count post-construction, thus operational noise impacts would be similar to existing conditions.

Therefore, the Project would not result in generation of a substantial temporary or permanent increase in ambient noise levels in the vicinity of the project in excess of standards established in the local general plan or noise ordinance, or applicable standards of other agencies. Impacts are less than significant.

b) Would the project result in generation of excessive groundborne vibration or groundborne noise levels?

Less than Significant. During certain construction phases, processes - such as earthmoving with bulldozers, the use of vibratory compaction rollers, impact pile driving, demolition, or pavement breaking - may cause construction-related vibration impacts such as human annoyance or, in some cases, building damage However, the Project site is located in a remote area with no parks, recreational areas, or occupied buildings nearby that would be exposed to groundborne vibration. As a result, potential vibration impacts on human activity and structures would be minimal. As discussed

in Section a), the nearest noise-sensitive receptors are located approximately 12 miles from the site, which is well beyond the distance at which groundborne vibration or noise would be perceptible.

The County of San Bernardino, CA Code of Ordinances *Section 83.01.090 Vibration* exempts motor vehicles not under the control of the subject use and temporary construction activities between 7:00 a.m. and 7:00 p.m., except Sundays and Federal holidays from regulations pertaining to vibration. Operations would not include equipment that would cause vibration any more than current conditions, thus a less than significant operational impact would occur.

Therefore, groundborne vibration and noise impacts associated with construction and operations of the Proposed Project would be less than significant.

c) *For a project located within the vicinity of a private airstrip or an airport land use plan or, where such a plan has not been adopted, within 2 miles of a public airport or public use airport, would the project expose people residing or working in the project area to excessive noise levels?*

No Impact. As discussed in Section 3.9 Hazards and Hazardous Materials, the nearest airport is the Chemehuevi Valley Airport, which is approximately 12 miles southeast of the Project site. This airport does not have an airport land use plan. As a result, there would be no impacts associated with exposing people residing or working in the Project area to excessive noise levels caused by airstrip on public airport.

4.14 POPULATION AND HOUSING

14.	POPULATION AND HOUSING. Would the project:	Potentially Significant Impact	Less than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
(a)	Induce substantial unplanned population growth in an area, either directly (for example, by proposing new homes and businesses) or indirectly (for example, through extension of roads or other infrastructure)?	☐	☐	☐	☒
(b)	Displace substantial numbers of existing people or housing, necessitating the construction of replacement housing elsewhere?	☐	☐	☐	☒

4.14.1 Environmental Setting

Regulatory Setting

State Housing Law

California planning and zoning law requires each city and county to adopt a general plan for future growth (CA Gov't Code § 65300). This plan must include a housing element that identifies housing needs for all economic segments and provides opportunities for housing development to meet that need. At the state level, the Housing and Community Development Department (HCD) estimates the relative share of California's projected population growth in each county based on California Department of Finance population projections and historical growth trends. These figures are compiled by HCD in a Regional Housing Needs Assessment (RHNA) for each region of California. Where there is a metropolitan planning

organization (MPO) or regional council of government (COG), HCD provides the RHNA to the MPO or COG. Such is the case for the County of San Bernardino, which is a member of the MPO known as the Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG). The SCAG RHNA Subcommittee assigns a share of the regional housing need to each city and county within the SCAG region. The process gives cities and counties the opportunity to comment on the proposed allocations. HCD oversees the process to ensure that the MPOs and COGs distribute their share of the state's projected housing need.

State law recognizes the vital role that local governments play in the supply and affordability of housing. To that end, California Government Code requires that the housing element achieve legislative goals to:

- Identify adequate sites to facilitate and encourage the development, maintenance, and improvement of housing for households of all economic levels, including persons with disabilities.
- Remove, as legally feasible and appropriate, governmental constraints to the production, maintenance, and improvement of housing for persons of all incomes, including those with disabilities.
- Assist in the development of adequate housing to meet the needs of low- and moderate-income households.
- Conserve and improve the condition of housing and neighborhoods, including existing affordable housing.
- Promote housing opportunities for all persons regardless of race, religion, sex, marital status, ancestry, national origin, color, familial status, or disability.
- Preserve for lower income households the publicly assisted multifamily housing developments in each community.

California housing element laws (Gov't Code §§ 65580–65589) require that each city and county identify and analyze existing and projected housing needs within its jurisdiction and prepare goals, policies, and programs to further the development, improvement, and preservation of housing for all economic segments of the community commensurate with local housing needs.

Regional Planning

SCAG is an MPO representing jurisdictions across 38,000 square miles in Imperial, Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino, and Ventura counties. As the federally recognized MPO for this region, SCAG provides a forum for addressing regional issues concerning transportation, the economy, community development, and the environment. SCAG is also the regional clearinghouse for projects requiring environmental documentation under federal and state law. In this role, SCAG reviews proposed development and infrastructure projects to analyze their impacts on regional planning programs. SCAG cooperates with agencies such as the South Coast Air Quality Management District and the California Department of Transportation in preparing regional planning documents. SCAG develops and maintains regional plans to achieve specific regional objectives. On April 7, 2016, SCAG adopted the 2016–2040 Regional Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategy (2016–2040 RTP/SCS), a long-range visioning plan that balances future mobility and housing needs with economic, environmental, and public health goals (SCAG 2016a). This long-range plan, required by the state of California and the federal government, is updated by SCAG every four years as demographic, economic, and policy circumstances change. A component of the 2016–2040 RTP/SCS is a set of growth forecasts that estimates population, employment, and housing growth. These estimates are used by SCAG, transportation agencies, and local agencies to anticipate and plan for growth. The 2020 RTP/SCS is expected to be adopted in mid-2020.

Existing Conditions

The Project site is located in a rural, sparsely populated area approximately 20 miles south of the City of Needles, within unincorporated San Bernardino County. The surrounding area consists primarily of open desert managed by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), with no residential or commercial development in the immediate vicinity. There are no existing housing units, businesses, or community infrastructure (e.g., schools, water/sewer systems) located within or adjacent to the proposed Project footprint. Due to the remote location and the absence of nearby urban services, the Project area is not identified as a growth area in SCAG's RTP/SCS.

4.14.2 Impact Analysis

a) Would the project induce substantial unplanned population growth in an area, either directly (for example, by proposing new homes and businesses) or indirectly (for example, through extension of roads or other infrastructure)?

No Impact. The Project would widen an existing road and is intended to improve congestion and safety. There is no proposed residential or business component that could result in substantial population growth in the area. Construction workers would come from the existing local labor pool. Implementation of the Project would not result in the generation of new permanent jobs and would not contribute to any substantial population growth. Therefore, Project implementation would not induce growth, either directly or indirectly. No impact would occur.

b) Would the project displace substantial numbers of existing people or housing, necessitating the construction of replacement housing elsewhere?

No Impact. The Project involves widening an existing road. The Project would expand into undisturbed open space area. The expansion area contains sparse desert vegetation and would not displace any residence. Therefore, implementation of the Project would not displace any people or existing housing. No impact would occur.

4.15 PUBLIC SERVICES

15.	PUBLIC SERVICES.	Potentially Significant Impact	Less than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
(a)	Would the project result in substantial adverse physical impacts associated with the provision of new or physically altered governmental facilities, need for new or physically altered governmental facilities, the construction of which could cause significant environmental impacts, in order to maintain acceptable service ratios, response times or other performance objectives for any of the public services:				
	i) Fire Protection?	☐	☐	☐	☒
	ii) Police Protection?	☐	☐	☐	☒
	iii) Schools?	☐	☐	☐	☒
	iv) Parks?	☐	☐	☐	☒
	v) Other public facilities?	☐	☐	☐	☒

4.15.1 Environmental Setting

San Bernardino County Fire Department

The San Bernardino County Fire Department (County Fire) provides emergency mitigation and management for fire suppression, emergency medical services (paramedic and nonparamedic), ambulance services, hazardous materials (HAZMAT) response, arson investigation, technical rescue, winter rescue operations, hazard abatement, and terrorism and weapons of mass destruction. County Fire's services and programs include helicopter rescue, a dozer, fire abatement hand crews, an inmate hand crew specialized program, and an honor guard. County Fire also provides for the management of: community safety services such as fire prevention, building construction plans and permits, household hazardous waste, and local oversight and collection program for hazardous materials. As of 2016, County Fire covers a territory of 16,500 square miles and operates over 75 fire stations and 11 facilities that serve more than 60 unincorporated communities; the cities of San Bernardino, Twentynine Palms, Grand Terrace; and the Town of Yucca Valley. Additionally, County Fire provides fire protection services through contracts to five cities—Adelanto, Needles, Victorville, Hesperia, and Fontana's independent fire protection district.

Fire protection for the Proposed Project is provided by the San Bernardino County Fire Department.

San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department

The San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department is the chief law enforcement agency for the county. The department's general law enforcement mission is carried out through the operation of 15 stations and a centralized headquarters, gangs, narcotics and homicide investigations, a crime laboratory and identification bureau, central records, specialized enforcement detail, technical services division, training division, employee resources division, two dispatch communication centers, and an aviation division for general patrol and search/rescue operations. The Coroner's Division is tasked with investigating the cause and manner of deaths, and the Public Administrator manages estates of persons who die without appointing an executor. The Courts Civil Division is in charge of imposing court-ordered settlements and providing security to the San Bernardino Superior Court system. The department is also mandated to perform search and rescue operations in the county through its mountain rescue, desert rescue, swift water, and dive teams.

Police services for the Proposed Project are provided by the San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department.

San Bernardino County Parks

Parks within the Project region are detailed below.

- **The Moabi Regional Park** includes 1,100 acres along the banks of the Colorado River, 11 miles southeast of Needles. Land facilities include camping, off-road vehicle trails, open fields, picnic facilities and shelters, zero-depth water play park, dry storage, shopping, and a restaurant. Water activities include fishing, boating, waterskiing, and jet skis. There are over 160 acres of open riding area and four miles of highway-vehicle access trails around the park. The Project site is located approximately 13 miles southwest of the Moabi Regional Park.

- **The Mojave National Preserve** encompasses 1,542,776 acres between I-15 and I-40 east of the unincorporated community of Baker. Prior to 1994, it was known as the East Mojave National Scenic Area and under BLM jurisdiction. Recreation activities include camping, hiking, scenic drives to view cinder cones, lava flows, Joshua tree forests, and the Kelso Dunes. The Project site is located approximately 40 miles southeast of the Mojave National Preserve.

4.15.2 Impact Analysis

a) i) Would the project result in substantial adverse physical impacts associated with the provision of new or physically altered governmental facilities, need for new or physically altered governmental facilities, the construction of which could cause significant environmental impacts, in order to maintain acceptable service ratios, response times or other performance objectives for fire protection?

No Impact. The Project involves widening an existing road. During construction, traffic control would occur on both Lake Havasu Road and the US-95 segment. The Traffic Control plan will identify alternative routes during construction to effectively and safely move drivers through the Project site. This will ensure that there will be adequate emergency vehicle access throughout the intersection.

Once operational, the Project will enhance emergency vehicle access through a widened lane and the addition of a left-turn pocket, improving traffic flow and ensuring quick and unimpeded passage for emergency vehicles. The Project is designed to work in tandem with existing emergency response infrastructure, minimizing any potential disruptions.

As discussion in Section 3.9.2, implementation of the Project would not create a potential fire hazard or result in an increase in the occurrence of fires. There would be no increase in the demand for fire protection that would result in the need for new or expanded fire protection facilities. No impacts would occur.

ii) Would the project result in substantial adverse physical impacts associated with the provision of new or physically altered governmental facilities, need for new or physically altered governmental facilities, the construction of which could cause significant environmental impacts, in order to maintain acceptable service ratios, response times or other performance objectives for police protection?

No Impact. The Project involves widening an existing road. During construction, traffic control would occur on both Lake Havasu Road and the US-95 segment. The Traffic Control plan will identify alternative routes during construction to effectively and safely move drivers through the Project site. This will ensure that there will be adequate police vehicle access throughout the intersection.

Once operational, the Project will enhance police vehicle access through a widened lane and the addition of a left-turn pocket, improving traffic flow and ensuring quick and unimpeded passage for police vehicles. Therefore, implementation of the Project would not result in an increase in the occurrence of crime, an increase in the demand for police protection, or the need for new or expanded police protection facilities. No impact would occur.

iii) Would the project result in substantial adverse physical impacts associated with the provision of new or physically altered governmental facilities, need for new or physically altered governmental facilities, the construction of which could cause significant environmental impacts, in order to maintain acceptable service ratios, response times or other performance objectives for schools?

No Impact. The Project does not include or induce residential development and would not result in an increased demand for additional schools in the area. There would be no impact on existing schools or the need to build additional schools.

iv) Would the project result in substantial adverse physical impacts associated with the provision of new or physically altered governmental facilities, need for new or physically altered governmental facilities, the construction of which could cause significant environmental impacts, in order to maintain acceptable service ratios, response times or other performance objectives for parks?

No Impact. The Project involves widening an existing road and does not include residential or other development that would result in either direct or indirect impacts to existing parks. Therefore, the Project would not result in an increase demand requiring additional local or regional park facilities. No impact would occur.

vi) Would the project result in substantial adverse physical impacts associated with the provision of new or physically altered governmental facilities, need for new or physically altered governmental facilities, the construction of which could cause significant environmental impacts, in order to maintain acceptable service ratios, response times or other performance objectives for other public facilities?

No Impact. No other public services would be impacted by the Project. The Project is not expected to adversely affect any other governmental services in the area. Therefore, no impacts related to other public facilities would occur.

4.16 RECREATION

16.	RECREATION. Would the project:	Potentially Significant Impact	Less than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
(a)	Would the project increase the use of existing neighborhood and regional parks or other recreational facilities such that substantial physical deterioration of the facility would occur or be accelerated?	☐	☐	☐	☒
(b)	Does the project include recreational facilities or require the construction or expansion of recreational facilities which might have an adverse physical effect on the environment?	☐	☐	☐	☒

4.16.1 Environmental Setting

Existing Parks and Recreational Resources

- **The Moabi Regional Park** includes 1,100 acres along the banks of the Colorado River, 11 miles southeast of Needles. Land facilities include camping, off-road vehicle trails, open fields, picnic

facilities and shelters, zero-depth water play park, dry storage, shopping, and a restaurant. Water activities include fishing, boating, waterskiing, and jet skis. There are over 160 acres of open riding area and four miles of highway-vehicle access trails around the park. The Project site is located approximately 13 miles southwest of the Moabi Regional Park

- **The Mojave National Preserve** encompasses 1,542,776 acres between I-15 and I-40 east of the unincorporated community of Baker. Prior to 1994, it was known as the East Mojave National Scenic Area and under BLM jurisdiction. Recreation activities include camping, hiking, scenic drives to view cinder cones, lava flows, Joshua tree forests, and the Kelso Dunes. The Project site is located approximately 40 miles southeast of the Mojave National Preserve.

4.16.2 Impact Analysis

a) Would the project increase the use of existing neighborhood and regional parks or other recreational facilities such that substantial physical deterioration of the facility would occur or be accelerated?

No Impact. The Project involves widening an existing road and does not include residential or other development that would result in either direct or indirect impacts to existing regional parks or other recreational facilities. There are no regional parks or recreational facilities within the Project vicinity. The nearest park is the Moabi Regional Park, located 13 miles northwest of the Project site. Therefore, the Project would not result in an increase in the use of local or regional parks or recreational facilities. No impact would occur.

b) Does the project include recreational facilities or require the construction or expansion of recreational facilities which might have an adverse physical effect on the environment?

No Impact. The Project involves widening an existing road. There are no recreational facilities within the Project vicinity. The Project does not include the development of new recreational facilities or require the construction or expansion of other recreational facilities which might have an adverse impact on the environment. Therefore, no impact would occur.

4.17 TRANSPORTATION

17.	**TRANSPORTATION.** **Would the project:**	**Potentially Significant Impact**	**Less than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated**	**Less Than Significant Impact**	**No Impact**
(a)	Conflict with a program, plan, ordinance or policy addressing the circulation system, including transit, roadways, bicycle and pedestrian facilities?	☐	☐	☐	☒
(b)	Conflict or be inconsistent with CEQA Guidelines section 15064.3, subdivision (b)?	☐	☐	☒	☐
(c)	Substantially increase hazards due to a geometric design feature (e. g., sharp curves or dangerous intersections) or incompatible uses (e.g., farm equipment)?	☐	☐	☐	☒
(d)	Result in inadequate emergency access?	☐	☐	☒	☐

4.17.1 Environmental Setting

The Project site is located in a remote area of eastern San Bernardino County at the intersection of US-95 and Havasu Lake Road, a rural roadway with limited surrounding development. US-95 serves as a regional highway connecting remote desert communities and is under the jurisdiction of Caltrans. Havasu Lake Road provides primary access to the Havasu Lake community and the Chemehuevi Indian Reservation. Existing traffic volumes in the area are low due to sparse population and development. The surrounding road network consists primarily of two-lane highways with minimal transit, pedestrian, or bicycle infrastructure. Emergency access is provided via US-95, which functions as a regional evacuation and emergency response route.

Regulatory Setting

California Transportation Commission

The California Transportation Commission (CTC) administers the public decision-making process that sets priorities and funds projects envisioned in long-range transportation plans. The CTC's programming includes the State Transportation Improvement Program, a multiyear capital improvement program of transportation projects on and off the state highway system, funded with revenues from the State Highway Account and other funding sources. The California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) manages the operation of state highways.

California Department of Transportation

Caltrans is the primary state agency responsible for transportation issues. One of its duties is the construction and maintenance of the state highway system. Caltrans approves the planning, design, and construction of improvements for all state-controlled facilities, including I-10, I-15, I-40, I-215, US-395, SR-18, SR-58, SR-62, SR-247, and the associated interchanges for these facilities in the County. Caltrans has established standards for roadway traffic flow and developed procedures to determine if state-controlled facilities require improvements. For projects that may physically affect facilities under its administration, Caltrans requires encroachment permits before any construction work may be undertaken. For projects that would not physically affect facilities but may influence traffic flow and LOS at such facilities, Caltrans may recommend measures to mitigate the traffic impacts of such projects.

Caltrans also prepares comprehensive planning documents, including Corridor System Management Plans and Transportation Concept Reports, which are long-range planning documents that establish a planning concept for state facilities. They identify a concept LOS, or "target" LOS, for the applicable highway facility. A deficiency or need for improvement is triggered when the actual LOS falls below the concept LOS.

San Bernardino County Transportation and Mobility Element

The San Bernardino County Transportation and Mobility Element is a component of the Countywide Plan that establishes policies and strategies for an efficient, safe, and sustainable transportation system across the county (County 2022). Polices relevant to the Proposed Project are detailed below.

- Policy TM-1.1 Roadway level of service (LOS). We require our roadways to be built to achieve the following minimum level of service standards during peak commute periods (typically 7:00-9:00 AM and 4:00-6:00 PM on a weekday):

- LOS D in the Valley Region
- LOS D in the Mountain Region
- LOS C in the North and East Desert Regions

- Policy TM-1.2 Interjurisdictional roadway consistency. We promote consistent cross-sections along roads traversing incorporated and unincorporated areas.

- Policy TM-1.3 Freeways and highways. We coordinate with Caltrans and regional transportation agencies and support the use of state, federal, and other agency funds to improve freeways and highways.

- Policy TM-1.8 Emergency access. When considering new roadway improvement proposals for the CIP or RTP, we consider the provision of adequate emergency access routes along with capacity expansion in unincorporated areas. Among access route improvements, we prioritize those that contribute some funding through a local area funding and financing mechanism.

- Policy TM-2.2 Roadway improvements. We require roadway improvements that reinforce the character of the area, such as curbs and gutters, sidewalks, landscaping, street lighting, and pedestrian and bicycle facilities. We require fewer improvements in rural areas and more improvements in urbanized areas, consistent with the Development Code. Additional standards may be required in municipal spheres of influence.

- Policy TM-2.5 Context-based features. When making road improvements, we provide feasible, context based transportation features such as:

  - Chain installation and inspection areas in the Mountain Region
  - Slow-vehicle turnouts on roadways with steep grades
  - Limited on-street parking areas to serve snow-plow or emergency services
  - Passing lanes in rural areas
  - Vista areas along scenic routes

4.17.2 Impact Analysis

a) Would the project conflict with a program, plan, ordinance, or policy addressing the circulation system, including transit, roadways, bicycle, and pedestrian facilities?

Less than Significant Impact. The purpose of the Project is to improve circulation in the intersection of the US-95 and Havasu Lake Road. The Project includes widening a lane along the US-95 to accommodate the addition of a left turn pocket. This would reduce idling vehicles waiting to turn left onto Havasu Lake Rd, thus improving traffic circulation at the intersection.

Existing traffic in the surrounding area is expected to be extremely low due to the scarcity of development. The Project is expected to generate approximately 20 worker trips per day during construction. Given that construction worker trips would be temporary and would be dispersed along different routes based on the origin of the trips, construction worker commuting is not expected to have a significant effect on the capacity of the transportation system in the area.

By widening a lane and adding a left-turn pocket at the intersection of US-95 and Havasu Lake Road, the Project improves traffic circulation, reduces congestion, and increases roadway efficiency in a rural area. These upgrades are consistent with the County's Transportation and Mobility Element goals of maintaining adequate level of service (LOS), enhancing highway infrastructure in coordination with Caltrans, and ensuring safe and efficient access for all road users, including emergency responders. Thus, the Project would not conflict with a program, plan, ordinance, or policy addressing the circulation system, including transit, roadways, bicycle and pedestrian facilities. Impacts would be less than significant.

b) *Would the project conflict or be inconsistent with CEQA Guidelines section 15064.3, subdivision (b)?*

No Impact. The Project does not propose additional through lanes that would increase traffic volume, but rather it would improve traffic flow by adding a left-turn pocket and widening a lane at the intersection of US-95 and Havasu Lake Road. Construction-related traffic would be temporary, with approximately 20 worker vehicles parked in a designated staging area. The Project is not expected to induce travel demand or substantially increase vehicle miles traveled (VMT), as it is intended to enhance traffic operations rather than expand capacity. Therefore, the Project would not conflict with or be inconsistent with CEQA Guidelines Section 15064.3, subdivision (b), and no impact would occur.

c) *Would the project substantially increase hazards due to a geometric design feature (e.g., sharp curves or dangerous intersections) or incompatible uses (e.g., farm equipment)?*

No Impact. The purpose of the Project is to improve circulation in the intersection of the US-95 and Havasu Lake Road. The Project includes widening a lane along the US-95 to accommodate the addition of a left turn pocket. This would reduce idling of vehicles waiting to turn left onto Havasu Lake Rd, thus improving traffic circulation at the intersection. Due to the proposed improvements at the intersection, the Project would have no impact associated with increasing hazards or incompatible uses.

d) *Would the project result in inadequate emergency access?*

Less Than Significant Impact. During construction, traffic control would occur on both Lake Havasu Road and the US-95 segment. The Traffic Control plan will be designed in accordance with the California Manual on Traffic Control Devices, Standard Specifications for Public Works Construction "Greenbook," and the County of San Bernardino Standards. Furthermore, the Traffic Control Plan shall be subject to review and approval by the San Bernardino County Department of Public Works.

The Traffic Control plan will identify alternative routes during construction to effectively and safely move drivers through the Project site. This will ensure that there will be adequate emergency vehicle access throughout the intersection.

Once operational, the Project will enhance emergency vehicle access through a widened lane and the addition of a left-turn pocket, improving traffic flow and ensuring quick and unimpeded passage for emergency vehicles. The Project is designed to work in tandem with existing emergency response infrastructure, minimizing any potential disruptions.

Impacts associated with construction and operations of the Proposed Project would be less than significant.

4.18 TRIBAL CULTURAL RESOURCES

18.	**TRIBAL CULTURAL RESOURCES. Would the project cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a tribal cultural resource, defined in Public Resources Code section 21074 as either a site, feature, place, cultural landscape that is geographically defined in terms of the size and scope of the landscape, sacred place, or object with cultural value to a California Native American tribe, and that is:**	**Potentially Significant Impact**	**Less than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated**	**Less Than Significant Impact**	**No Impact**
(a)	Listed or eligible for listing in the California Register of Historical Resources, or in a local register of historical resources as defined in Public Resources Code section 5020.1(k), or	☐	☐	☐	☒
(b)	A resource determined by the lead agency, in its discretion and supported by substantial evidence, to be significant pursuant to criteria set forth in subdivision (c) of Public Resources Code Section 5024.1. In applying the criteria set forth in subdivision (c) of Public Resources Code Section 5024.1, the lead agency shall consider the significance of the resource to a California Native American tribe.	☐	☐	☐	☒

4.18.1 Environmental Setting

Regulatory Setting

Federal

Archaeological Resources Protection Act

The Archaeological Resources Protection Act of 1979 regulates the protection of archaeological resources and sites on federal and Indian lands.

Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA)

NAGPRA is a federal law passed in 1990 that mandates museums and federal agencies to return certain Native American cultural items—such as human remains, funerary objects, sacred objects, or objects of cultural patrimony—to lineal descendants or culturally affiliated Indian tribes.

State

Public Resources Code

Archaeological resources are protected pursuant to a wide variety of state policies and regulations enumerated under the California Public Resources Code (PRC). In addition, cultural resources are recognized as nonrenewable resources and therefore receive protection under the PRC and the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).

PRC Sections 5097.9 to 5097.991 provide protection to Native American historical and cultural resources and sacred sites and identify the powers and duties of the Native American Heritage Commission (NAHC). These sections also require notification to descendants of discoveries of Native American human remains and provide for treatment and disposition of human remains and associated grave goods

Health and Safety Code

The discovery of human remains is regulated by California Health and Safety Code Section 7050.5:

> In the event of discovery or recognition of any human remains in any location other than a dedicated cemetery, there shall be no further excavation…until the coroner…has determined…that the remains are not subject to…provisions of law concerning investigation of the circumstances, manner and cause of any death, and the recommendations concerning the treatment and disposition of the human remains have been made to the person responsible…. The coroner shall make his or her determination within two working days from the time the person responsible for the excavation, or his or her authorized representative, notifies the coroner of the discovery or recognition of the human remains. If the coroner determines that the remains are not subject to his or her authority and…has reason to believe that they are those of a Native American, he or she shall contact, by telephone within 24 hours, the Native American Heritage Commission.

California Senate Bill 18

Senate Bill (SB) 18 (California Government Code, Section 65352.3) incorporates the protection of California traditional tribal cultural places into land use planning for cities, counties, and agencies by establishing responsibilities for local governments to contact, refer plans to, and consult with California Native American tribes as part of the adoption or amendment of any general or specific plan proposed on or after March 1, 2005. SB18 requires public notice to be sent to tribes listed on the Native American Heritage Commission's SB18 Tribal Consultation list within the geographical areas affected by the proposed changes. Tribes must respond to a local government notice within 90 days (unless a shorter time frame has been agreed upon by the tribe), indicating whether or not they want to consult with the local government. Consultations are for the purpose of preserving or mitigating impacts to places, features, and objects described in Sections 5097.9 and 5097.993 of the Public Resources Code that may be affected by the proposed adoption or amendment to a general or specific plan.

Assembly Bill 52

The Native American Historic Resource Protection Act (AB 52) took effect July 1, 2015, and incorporates tribal consultation and analysis of impacts to tribal cultural resources (TCR) into the CEQA process. It requires TCRs to be analyzed like any other CEQA topic and establishes a consultation process for lead agencies and California tribes. Projects that require a Notice of Preparation of an EIR or Notice of Intent to Adopt a Negative Declaration are subject to AB 52. A significant impact on a TCR is considered a significant environmental impact, requiring feasible mitigation measures.

TCRs must have certain characteristics:

1) Sites, features, places, cultural landscapes (must be geographically defined), sacred places, and objects with cultural value to a California Native American tribe that are either included or determined to be eligible for inclusion in the California Register of Historic Resources or included in a local register of historical resources. (PRC § 21074[a][1])

2) The lead agency, supported by substantial evidence, chooses to treat the resource as a TCR. (PRC § 21074[a][2])

The first category requires that the TCR qualify as a historical resource according to PRC Section 5024.1. The second category gives the lead agency discretion to qualify that resource—under the conditions that it support its determination with substantial evidence and consider the resource's significance to a California tribe. The process is similar to SB 18 with more defined timing (PRC §§ 21080.3.1–3.3):

- A California Native American tribe asks agencies in the geographic area with which it is traditionally and culturally affiliated to be notified about projects. Tribes must ask in writing.
- Within 14 days of deciding to undertake a project or determining that a project application is complete, the lead agency must provide formal written notification to all tribes who have requested it.
- A tribe must respond within 30 days of receiving the notification if it wishes to engage in consultation.
- The lead agency must initiate consultation within 30 days of receiving the request from the tribe.
- Consultation concludes when both parties have agreed on measures to mitigate or avoid a significant effect to a TCR, OR a party, after a reasonable effort in good faith, decides that mutual agreement cannot be reached.
- Regardless of the outcome of consultation, the CEQA document must disclose significant impacts on TCRs and discuss feasible alternatives or mitigation that avoid or lessen the impact

4.18.2 Impact Analysis

a) Would the project cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a tribal cultural resource, defined in Public Resources Code section 21074 as either a site, feature, place, cultural landscape that is geographically defined in terms of the size and scope of the landscape, sacred place, or object with cultural value to a California Native American tribe, and that is Listed or eligible for listing in the California Register of Historical Resources, or in a local register of historical resources as defined in Public Resources Code section 5020.1(k)?

b) Would the project cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a tribal cultural resource, defined in Public Resources Code section 21074 as either a site, feature, place, cultural landscape that is geographically defined in terms of the size and scope of the landscape, sacred place, or object with cultural value to a California Native American tribe, and that is a resource determined by the lead agency, in its discretion and supported by substantial evidence, to be significant pursuant to criteria set forth in subdivision (c) of Public Resources Code Section 5024.1. In applying the criteria set forth in subdivision (c) of Public Resources Code Section 5024.1, the lead agency shall consider the significance of the resource to a California Native American tribe?

a&b) **No Impact.** Chambers Group submitted a request to the California NAHC for a SLF search, on March 17, 2025. The SLF search results, received on March 18, 2025, were negative for the study area, indicating that no sacred sites were identified within a half-mile radius of the Project site. These

results were conveyed to the County upon receipt and are included in Appendix B of the Archaeological Survey (Appendix C).

Pursuant to PRC Section 21080.3.1 (AB 52), California Native American tribes traditionally and culturally affiliated with a Project area can request notification of projects in their traditional cultural territory. In accordance with AB 52, letters explaining the Project and providing an opportunity to consult were sent via email on December 19, 2024 to the Twenty-Nine Palms Band of Mission Indians, Colorado River Tribes, and San Manuel Band of Mission Indians. All aforementioned tribes either did not respond or declined to consult on the Proposed Project. Based on input from the tribes and the absence of known tribal cultural resources, the Project would not cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a tribal cultural resource. Therefore, no impact would occur.

4.19 UTILITIES AND SERVICE SYSTEMS

19.	UTILITIES/SERVICE SYSTEMS. Would the project:	Potentially Significant Impact	Less than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
(a)	Require or result in the relocation or construction of new or expanded water, wastewater treatment or storm water drainage, electric power, natural gas, or telecommunications facilities, the construction or relocation of which could cause significant environmental effects?	☐	☐	☐	☒
(b)	Have sufficient water supplies available to serve the project and reasonably foreseeable future development during normal, dry and multiple dry years?	☐	☐	☒	☐
(c)	Result in a determination by the wastewater treatment provider which serves or may serve the project that it has adequate capacity to serve the project's projected demand in addition to the provider's existing commitments?	☐	☐	☐	☒
(d)	Generate solid waste in excess of State or local standards, or in excess of the capacity of local infrastructure, or otherwise impair the attainment of solid waste reduction goals?	☐	☐	☒	☐
(e)	Negatively impact the provision of solid waste services or impair the attainment of solid waste reduction goals?	☐	☐	☒	☐
(f)	Comply with federal, state, and local management and reduction statutes and regulations related to solid wastes?	☐	☐	☐	☒

4.19.1 Environmental Setting

Regulatory Setting

Clean Water Act

The federal Clean Water Act (CWA), United States Code, Title 33, Section 1251 et seq. establishes regulations to control the discharge of pollutants into the waters of the United States and regulates water

quality standards for surface waters. Under the CWA, the US Environment Protection Agency (EPA) is authorized to set wastewater standards for industry and runs the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit program. Under the NPDES program, permits are required for all new developments that generate discharges that go directly into "Waters of the United States." Additionally, Section 1251 et seq. of the CWA require wastewater treatment of all effluent before it is discharged into surface waters.

Porter-Cologne Water Quality Act

The Porter-Cologne Water Quality Act (Water Code § 13000 et seq.) is the basic water quality control law for California. Under this act, the State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB) has primary responsibility for coordination and control of water quality. In California, the EPA has delegated authority to issue NPDES permits to the SWRCB. The state is divided into nine regions related to water quality and quantity characteristics. The SWRCB, through its nine Regional Water Quality Control Boards (RWQCBs), carries out the regulation, protection, and administration of water quality in each region. Each regional board is required to adopt a Water Quality Control Plan or Basin Plan that recognizes and reflects the regional differences in existing water quality, the beneficial uses of the region's ground and surface water, and local water quality conditions and problems.

General Waste Discharge Requirement

On May 2, 2006, the SWRCB adopted a General Waste Discharge Requirement (Order No. 2006-0003) for all publicly owned sanitary sewer collection systems in California with more than one mile of sewer pipe. The order provides a consistent statewide approach to reducing sanitary sewer overflows by requiring public sewer system operators to take all feasible steps to control the volume of waste discharged into the system, to prevent sanitary sewer waste from entering the storm sewer system, and to develop a Sanitary Sewer Master Plan. The General Waste Discharge Requirement also requires that storm sewer overflows be reported to the SWRCB using an online reporting system.

Sanitary District Act of 1923

The Sanitary District Act of 1923 (Health and Safety Code Section 6400 et seq.) authorizes the formation of sanitation districts and empowers the districts to construct, operate, and maintain facilities for the collection, treatment, and disposal of wastewater. The act was amended in 1949 to allow the districts to also provide solid waste management and disposal services, including refuse transfer and resource recovery.

AB 885

The SWRCB implements regulations to reduce the impact of wastewater sources on groundwater quality in accordance with state law (AB 885) through its water quality control policy for siting, design, operation, and maintenance of onsite wastewater treatment systems (OWTS) (septic systems) (Resolution No. 2012-0032). This policy establishes a statewide, risk-based, tiered approach for the regulation and management of OWTS installations and replacements that have affected, or will affect, groundwater or surface water to a degree that makes it unfit for drinking water or other uses, or cause a health or public nuisance condition. RWQCBs incorporated the standards established in the OWTS policy or standards that are more protective of the environment and public health into their water quality control plans. Implementation is

overseen by the state and regional water quality boards and local agencies (e.g., county and city departments and independent districts).

National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System Waste discharge requirements for effluent discharged from wastewater treatment facilities to Waters of the United States are set forth in permits issued by regional water quality control boards. The Colorado River Basin RWQCB is responsible for such for facilities in the Project region.

CALGreen

On July 17, 2008, the California Building Standards Commission adopted the nation's first green building standards. The California Green Building Standards Code (Part 11, Title 24) was adopted as part of the California Building Standards Code (Title 24, California Code of Regulations). CALGreen established planning and design standards for sustainable site development, energy efficiency (in excess of the California Energy Code requirements), water conservation, material conservation, and internal air contaminants. The mandatory provisions of CALGreen became effective January 1, 2011. The building efficiency standards are enforced through the local building permit process. The code was updated again in 2013, effective January 1, 2014, except energy based measures whose implementation was delayed until July 1, 2014.

The purpose of CALGreen is to improve public health, safety, and general welfare by enhancing the design and construction of buildings through the use of building concepts having a reduced negative impact or positive environmental impact and encouraging sustainable construction practices in the following categories:

- Planning and design
- Energy efficiency
- Water efficiency and conservation
- Material conservation and resource efficiency
- Environmental quality

Regional Existing Conditions

The City of Needles provides sewer services and wastewater treatment facilities within the City boundary and to unincorporated areas within their sphere of influence (SOI), which includes the vicinity of the Project site. Private wells supply the City of Needles SOI's water demands as there is no municipal water service.

Southern California Edison (SCE) and the City of Needles Electric Department provides electricity to the Project region.

The County has nine publicly owned permitted landfills/disposal sites as listed below:

- Municipal: California Street Sanitary Landfill;
- County: Barstow, Colton, Landers, Mid-Valley, San Timoteo, and Victorville;
- Federal: Fort Irwin and 29 Palms U.S. Marine Corps Base

Project Area Existing Conditions

There are no existing utility infrastructure systems - such as water, sewer, or gas lines - within the immediate Project footprint. The Project does not intersect with any municipal utility corridors or service lines. The only utility feature present is a high-voltage transmission line, operated by SCE, which transects the northern portion of the Project site. This transmission line is elevated and located outside of the proposed roadway expansion area. The transmission line pole structure and associated ground-level components are located in proximity to the Project boundary.

4.19.2 Impact Analysis

a) *Would the project require or result in the relocation or construction of new or expanded water, wastewater treatment or stormwater drainage, electric power, natural gas, or telecommunications facilities, the construction or expansion of which could cause significant environmental effects?*

No Impact. The Project does not require or result in the relocation or construction of new or expanded water, wastewater treatment or stormwater drainage, electric power, natural gas, or telecommunications facilities. The Proposed Project involves widening a road segment along the US-95 to accommodate the addition of a left-turn pocket. Although an elevated high-voltage transmission line transects the Project site, no utilities will be disturbed. While the majority of the line is elevated, a pole structure and associated ground-level components are located in proximity to the Project boundary. Although temporary de-energization of the line may be required during certain phases of construction for safety reasons, the transmission infrastructure will not be physically disturbed or relocated. Thus, no impact would occur.

b) *Would the project have sufficient water supplies available to serve the project and reasonably foreseeable future development during normal dry and multiple dry years?*

Less than Significant Impact. The proposed road-widening Project is for safety purposes and would not induce population growth that would increase the use of water in the County. A minimal amount of water will be used on-site during construction for dust control, in compliance with Best Management Practices (BMPs). This water will be stored in a tank and transported to the site. No water will be used during Project operations. Given only a small amount of water will be used during construction, there is a less than significant impact on water supplies.

c) *Would the project result in a determination by the wastewater treatment provider which serves or may serve the project that it has adequate capacity to serve the project's projected demand in addition to the provider's existing commitments?*

No Impact. As discussed in b) above, the proposed road widening is for safety purposes and would not be an expansion of roadway that would induce population growth. The Project does not require wastewater treatment and, thus, would not impact capacity of the wastewater treatment system.

d) Generate solid waste in excess of State or local standards, or in excess of the capacity of local infrastructure, or otherwise impair the attainment of solid waste reduction goals?

e) Would the project negatively impact the provision of solid waste services or impair the attainment of solid waste reduction goals?

d & e) Less Than Significant. The demolition and construction required for the proposed Project would generate solid waste. Waste-generating activities include clearing and grubbing of vegetation.

The Project would adhere to the California Green Building Standards Code, which requires covered projects to reuse, salvage, or divert the minimum amount of waste produced. The remaining waste would not be substantial and could be received by the local landfill. Operations of the Project would not generate solid waste. Therefore, the proposed Project would have a less than significant impact regarding solid waste generation in excess of State or local stands or the capacity of local infrastructure.

f) Would the project comply with federal, state, and local management and reduction statutes and regulations related to solid waste?

No Impact. As discussed in d&e) above, the waste remaining after complying with State construction and demolition requirements would not be substantial. The Project would comply with all federal, state, and local waste management and reductions requirements. Therefore, no impacts would occur related to solid waste-related federal, state, and local management and reduction statutes and regulations.

4.20 WILDFIRE

20.	WILDFIRE. If located in or near state responsibility areas or lands classified as very high fire hazard severity zones, would the project:	Potentially Significant Impact	Less than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
(a)	Substantially impair an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan?	☐	☐	☒	☐
(b)	Due to slope, prevailing winds, and other factors, exacerbate wildfire risks, and thereby expose project occupants to, pollutant concentrations from a wildfire or the uncontrolled spread of a wildfire?	☐	☐	☒	☐
(c)	Require the installation or maintenance of associated infrastructure (such as roads, fuel breaks, emergency water sources, power lines or other utilities) that may exacerbate fire risk or that may result in temporary or ongoing impacts to the environment?	☐	☐	☐	☒
(d)	Expose people or structures to significant risks, including downslope or downstream flooding or landslides, as a result of runoff, post-fire slope instability, or drainage changes?	☐	☐	☒	☐

4.20.1 Environmental Setting

Regulatory Setting

State

California Fire Code (Title 24, Part 9 of the California Code of Regulations)

The California Fire Code (Title 24, Part 9 of the California Code of Regulations) establishes minimum fire safety standards for buildings and structures in California, with specific provisions aimed at mitigating the risk of fire hazards. This code incorporates fire prevention measures related to building construction, materials, occupancy, and operational procedures, including the installation of fire detection and suppression systems, emergency access, and fire-resistive barriers. The Fire Code mandates compliance with specific fire protection standards in high-risk areas, including defensible space requirements, vegetation management, and fire-resistant materials for structures exposed to wildfires. It integrates provisions from the California Building Standards Code and aligns with nationally recognized standards such as those from the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA). Regular updates to the Fire Code ensure its relevance in addressing emerging wildfire risks and new technologies. Enforcement of these regulations is critical for reducing fire-related risks in both urban and wildland-urban interface zones.

California Government Code Section 65302(g)

California Government Code Section 65302(g) requires that the safety element of a city or county general plan address the protection of the community from unreasonable risks associated with various hazards, including wildfires. The section mandates that jurisdictions identify fire hazard severity zones, establish evacuation routes, and incorporate policies and programs to reduce the risk of wildfire and ensure public safety. It also requires coordination with fire protection agencies and consideration of climate change impacts that could exacerbate fire risk. The intent is to ensure that land use planning decisions account for and mitigate wildfire hazards to protect lives, property, and natural resources.

Local

San Bernardino Countywide Plan

The San Bernardino Countywide Plan establishes the following relevant polies to the Proposed Project:

- **Policy HZ-1.9 Hazard areas maintained as open space**. We minimize risk associated with flood, geologic, and fire hazard zones or areas by encouraging such areas to be preserved and maintained as open space.

- **Policy HZ-1.13 Fire protection planning**. We require that all new development in County-designated Fire Safety Overlay and/or CAL FIRE-designated Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zones meet the requirements of the California Fire Code and the California Building Code as amended by the County Fire Protection District, including Title 14 of the California Code of Regulations fire safety requirements for any new development within State Responsibility Areas, as well as provide and maintain a Fire Protection Plan or Defensible Space/Fuel Modification Plan and other pre-planning measures in accordance with the County Code of Ordinances

- **Policy HZ-1.14 Long-term fire hazard reduction and abatement**. We require proactive vegetation management/hazard abatement to reduce fire hazards on existing private properties, along roadsides of evacuation routes out of wildfire prone areas, and other private/public land where applicable, and we require new development to enter into a long-term maintenance agreement for vegetation management in defensible space, fuel modification, and roadside fuel reduction in the Fire Safety Overlay and/or Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zones.

- **Policy HZ-1.15 Evacuation route adequacy**. We coordinate with CAL FIRE, California's Office of Emergency Services, and other local fire districts to identify strategies that ensure the maintenance and reliability of evacuation routes potentially compromised by wildfire, including emergency evacuation and supply transportation routes.

- **Policy PP-4.1 Emergency management plans.** We maintain, update, and adopt the Emergency Operations Plan, Continuity of Operations Plan, and the Multi-Jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan. Plan updates are coordinated with wildfire hazard planning efforts of outside agencies, such as CALFIRE Strategic Fire Plan, Community Wildfire Protection Plans, U.S. Forest Service, military institutions, California Fire Safe Council and other nonprofit stakeholder groups, and other applicable local, state, and federal agencies.

Existing Conditions

The Project site is located within a Federal Responsibility Area and is classified as a Moderate Fire Hazard Severity Zone (County 2020d).

4.20.2 Impact Analysis

a) Would the project impair an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan?

Less Than Significant Impact. As discussed in Section 3.9 Hazards and Hazardous Materials, the Project site is subject to the County of San Bernardino Emergency Operations Plan (EOP) and Multi-Jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan.

During construction, traffic control would occur on both Lake Havasu Road and the US-95 segment. The Traffic Control plan will identify alternative routes during construction to effectively and safely move drivers through the Project site. This will ensure that there will be adequate emergency vehicle access throughout the intersection.

Once operational, the Project will enhance emergency vehicle access through a widened lane and the addition of a left-turn pocket, improving traffic flow and ensuring quick and unimpeded passage for emergency vehicles. The Project is designed to work in tandem with existing emergency response infrastructure, minimizing any potential disruptions.

Furthermore, the Project would not alter existing land uses or introduce new ignition sources, and thus would not result in any increase in wildfire risk. As discussed in Section 3.9.2, fire hazard conditions and the level of emergency response readiness during operations will remain consistent with pre-Project conditions. Therefore, the Project has a less than significant impact on emergency response and emergency evacuation plans.

b) *Would the project, due to slope, prevailing winds, and other factors, exacerbate wildfire risks, and thereby expose project occupants to, pollutant concentrations from a wildfire or the uncontrolled spread of a wildfire?*

Less Than Significant Impact. The Project is widening a road in a relatively flat intersection in an undeveloped area. The Project is in a desert environment with dry vegetation and high temperatures, which can contribute to wildfire risk. The Project site is classified as a Federal Responsibility Area (FRA) within a Moderate Fire Hazard Severity Zone (County 2020d). Although the Project is located on desert terrain with spare vegetation, there are no historical records of fires occurring within the Project vicinity (CalFire 2023). The removal of vegetation along the expansion area would further reduce the risk of wildfire. The Project would not alter existing land uses, introduce new habitable structures, or significantly increase human presence or ignition sources. Fire risks and the level of emergency response readiness during operations will be similar to existing conditions.

The Project would not exacerbate the uncontrolled spread of wildfire due to slope, prevailing wind, or other factors. Impacts associated with wildfires would be less than significant.

c) *Would the project require the installation or maintenance of associated infrastructure (such as roads, fuel breaks, emergency water sources, power lines, or other utilities) that may exacerbate fire risk or that may result in temporary or ongoing impacts to the environment?*

No Impact. The proposed road widening Project would not require installation of any additional infrastructure that may exacerbate fire risks. The Project would not alter existing land uses or introduce new ignition sources, and thus would not result in any increase in wildfire risk. Fire hazard conditions and the level of emergency response readiness during operations will remain consistent with pre-Project conditions. No impact would occur.

d) *Would the project expose people or structures to significant risks, including downslope or downstream flooding or landslides, as a result of runoff, post-fire slope instability or drainage changes?*

Less Than Significant Impact. The Project is not down slope and would not create drainage changes. It is in a relatively flat undeveloped area. Although the Project is located on desert environment with dry vegetation and high temperatures, there are no historical records of fires occurring within the Project vicinity (CalFire 2023). Furthermore, the Project would not alter existing land uses or introduce new ignition sources, and thus would not result in any increase in wildfire risk. Fire hazard conditions and the level of emergency response readiness during operations will remain consistent with pre-Project conditions. Therefore, there would be less than significant impact associated with creating significant risks from flooding, landslides, or post-fire slope instability.

4.21 MANDATORY FINDINGS OF SIGNIFICANCE

21.	MANDATORY FINDINGS OF SIGNIFICANCE.	Potentially Significant Impact	Less than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
(a)	Does the project have the potential to substantially degrade the quality of the environment, substantially reduce the habitat of a fish or wildlife species, cause a fish or wildlife population to drop below self-sustaining levels, threaten to eliminate a plant or animal community, substantially reduce the number or restrict the range of a rare or endangered plant or animal or eliminate important examples of the major periods of California history or prehistory?	☐	☒	☐	☐
(b)	Does the project have impacts that are individually limited, but cumulatively considerable? ("Cumulatively considerable" means that the incremental effects of a project are considerable when viewed in connection with the effects of past projects, the effects of other current projects, and the effects of probable future projects?)	☐	☐	☒	☐
(c)	Does the project have environmental effects which will cause substantial adverse effects on human beings, either directly or indirectly?	☐	☐	☒	☐

4.21.1 Impact Analysis

a) Does the project have the potential to substantially degrade the quality of the environment, substantially reduce the habitat of a fish or wildlife species, cause a fish or wildlife population to drop below self-sustaining levels, threaten to eliminate a plant or animal community, substantially reduce the number or restrict the range of a rare or endangered plant or animal or eliminate important examples of the major periods of California history or prehistory?

Less Than Significant Impact with Mitigation Incorporated. As discussed in Section 3.7, according to the Paleontological Resources Technical Report prepared for the Draft EIR of the San Bernardino Countywide Plan, the Project site is within a region with no paleontological sensitivity (County 2019). Furthermore, the Project would be partially occurring in previously disturbed land and would have a low excavation depth. No impacts on paleontological resources would occur.

As discussed in Section 3.4, the Project site is located within the United States Fish and Wildlife Service's (USFWS) designated critical habitat for desert tortoise (Appendix B). Although desert tortoise has not been observed within the Project vicinity since 1987, this does not preclude the possibility of this species occurring within the Project vicinity during construction. Furthermore, ground disturbing activities may disturb nesting birds, which are protected under the MBTA. Therefore, MM BIO-1, which requires a pre-construction survey for desert tortoise and MM BIO-2, which requires pre-construction nesting bird surveys and/or buffer zones, shall be implemented to reduce impacts to less than significant.

b) *Does the project have impacts that are individually limited, but cumulatively considerable? ("Cumulatively considerable" means that the incremental effects of a project are considerable when viewed in connection with the effects of past projects, the effects of other current projects, and the effects of probable future projects?)*

Less Than Significant Impact. The Proposed Project is located in a remote area of the County, with no surrounding development or urban infrastructure. The nearest residences are located approximately 12 miles southeast at the Chemehuevi Reservation, and there are no other planned or foreseeable projects in the immediate vicinity that would contribute to cumulative environmental effects.

Given the limited scope and short duration of construction, as well as the Project's intent to improve intersection safety and efficiency, any environmental impacts would be temporary and localized. The Project is also subject to standard regulatory compliance measures that further minimize potential impacts. When considered in the context of past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future projects, the incremental effects of the proposed Project would not be cumulatively considerable. Therefore, cumulative impacts would be less than significant.

c) *Does the project have environmental effects which will cause substantial adverse effects on human beings, either directly or indirectly?*

Less Than Significant Impact. Substantial adverse effects on human beings directly or indirectly are primarily resulting from impacts to air quality, geology and soil, greenhouse gas emissions, hazardous materials, land use, noise, and wildfire. Given the Proposed Project would have no significant impacts relating to these categories, it is reasonable to assume there would be no substantial adverse effects on human beings either directly or indirectly**.**

Any impacts associated with the Proposed Project would cease upon completion of construction. The traffic conditions in the intersection would be improved resulting in less idling of vehicles waiting to turn left onto Havasu Lake Rd. Thus, the Project would not have the potential to result in substantial adverse effect on human beings. A less than significant impact would occur.

SECTION 5.0 – REFERENCES

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