

# Interstate 15/Railroad Canyon Road Interchange Improvement Project

CITY OF LAKE ELSINORE  
RIVERSIDE COUNTY, CALIFORNIA  
DISTRICT 08 – RIV – 15 PM 18.3/21.0  
EA 08-0A4400 PN 080000016

## Initial Study with Mitigated Negative Declaration/ Environmental Assessment with Finding of No Significant Impact



**Prepared by the  
State of California Department of Transportation**

The environmental review, consultation, and any other actions required by applicable Federal environmental laws for this project are being, or have been, carried out by Caltrans pursuant to 23 USC 327 and the Memorandum of Understanding dated December 23, 2016, and executed by FHWA and Caltrans.



August 2017

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## **General Information about This Document**

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The City of Lake Elsinore, in cooperation with the Riverside County Transportation Commission (RCTC) and the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans), proposes improvements to the Interstate 15 (I-15)/Railroad Canyon Road interchange (IC) and the construction of a new interchange 0.22 mile north of the existing I-15/Franklin Street overcrossing in the City of Lake Elsinore.

**Initial Study with Mitigated Negative Declaration / Environmental Assessment with  
Finding of No Significant Impact**

Submitted Pursuant to: (State) Division 13, California Public Resources Code and  
(Federal) 42 U.S.C. 4332(2)(C)

THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA  
Department of Transportation

8/25/17  
Date of Approval

  
David Bricker  
Deputy District Director  
District 8 Division of Environmental Planning  
California Department of Transportation  
NEPA and CEQA Lead Agency

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CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION  
FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT (FONSI)

Interstate 15/Railroad Canyon Road Interchange Improvement Project  
RIV—15 PM 18.3/21.0

FOR

The California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) has determined that Alternative 2 will have no significant impact on the human environment. This FONSI is based on the attached Environmental Assessment (EA) and the associated technical studies which have been independently evaluated by Caltrans and determined to adequately and accurately discuss the need, environmental issues, and impacts of the proposed project and appropriate mitigation measures. It provides sufficient evidence and analysis for determining that an Environmental Impact Statement is not required. Caltrans takes full responsibility for the accuracy, scope, and content of the attached EA and associated technical studies.

The environmental review, consultation, and any other action required in accordance with applicable Federal laws for this project is being, or has been, carried-out by Caltrans under its assumption of responsibility pursuant to 23 USC 327.

8/25/17  
Date

  
David Bricker  
Deputy District Director  
District 8 Division of Environmental Planning  
Caltrans Department of Transportation

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## MITIGATED NEGATIVE DECLARATION

Pursuant to: Division 13, Public Resources Code

### ***Project Description***

The City of Lake Elsinore, in cooperation with the Riverside County Transportation Commission (RCTC) and the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans), proposes improvements to the Interstate 15 (I-15)/Railroad Canyon Road interchange (IC) and the construction of a new interchange 0.22 mile north of the existing I-15/Franklin Street overcrossing in the City of Lake Elsinore.

### ***Determination***

Caltrans has prepared an Initial Study for this project, and following public review, has determined from this study that the proposed project would not have a significant effect on the environment for the following reasons:

The proposed project would have no effect on:

- Coastal Zones
- Wild and Scenic Rivers
- Farmlands or Timberlands

In addition, the proposed project would have less than significant effects to:

- Land Use
- Growth
- Community Character and Cohesion
- Utilities and Emergency Services
- Traffic and Transportation
- Visual/Aesthetics
- Geology and Soils
- Hazardous Waste and Materials
- Air Quality
- Noise
- Water Quality
- Hydrology and Floodplain
- Cultural Resources

With the following mitigation measures incorporated, the proposed project would have less than significant effects to:

- Paleontological Resources
- Biological Resources
- Wetlands and Other Waters

**PAL-1** Prior to the beginning of construction activities, a Paleontological Mitigation Plan (PMP) for implementation during the excavation phase of the project. The PMP shall include, but not be limited to, the following:

- a) A pre-construction field survey shall be conducted, followed by salvage of surface paleontological resources, if necessary.
- b) All grading and excavation in sediments with the potential to contain paleontological resources shall be monitored by trained paleontological crews working under the direction of a qualified professional. Monitors shall be empowered to temporarily halt or divert equipment to allow the removal of abundant or large specimens. Paleontological monitors shall be equipped to salvage fossils as they are unearthed to avoid construction delays.
- c) The fossils shall be stabilized, salvaged, and removed to safe off-site storage.
- d) The fossils shall undergo preparation, identification, and analysis to allow their identification.
- e) The fossils shall be curated into the systematic storage system of an established institutional repository.
- f) A Paleontological Mitigation Report signifying completion of the PMP shall be prepared and submitted to Caltrans.

**AN-1** A burrowing owl pre-construction survey within 30 days prior to ground disturbance is mandatory in suitable habitat areas. If burrowing owls are found to be present in the BSA during subsequent pre-construction surveys, then the project-specific mitigation would be developed and authorized through consultation with the Western Riverside County Regional Conservation Authority, as outlined in the Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan (MSHCP), Table 9.2, and Appendix E of this document, Summary of MSHCP Species Survey Requirements.

**WET-4** For impacts to streambed and non-wetland waters, the City will purchase credits from a USACE- and CDFW-approved mitigation bank in the form of habitat enhancement, habitat creation, or a combination of habitat enhancement and habitat creation. Mitigation ratios for impacts to waters typically vary from 1:1 to 5:1. Negotiation with the USACE and the CDFW will take place to establish final mitigation ratios.



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David Bricker  
Deputy District Director  
District 8 Division of Environmental Planning  
California Department of Transportation

8/25/17  
Date