

Memorandum

To: CHAIR AND COMMISSIONERS
CALIFORNIA TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

CTC Meeting: May 7, 2013

Reference No.: 2.3a.(1)
Action item

From: NORMA ORTEGA
Chief Financial Officer

Prepared by: Terry L. Abbott
Chief
Division of Design

Subject: ROUTE ADOPTION - CONTROLLED ACCESS HIGHWAY
06-FRE-180 PM R3.5/R53.6
RESOLUTION HRA 13-01

RECOMMENDATION:

Submitted for transmittal to the California Transportation Commission (Commission) are Highway Route Adoption Resolution HRA 13-01 and a route location map for State Highway Route (SR) 180. The California Department of Transportation (Department) recommends that the Commission approve the resolution and the route location map in accordance with the recommendation of the Chief Engineer. The resolution grants approval of the route adoption of SR 180 in Fresno County from Post Mile (PM) R3.5 to R53.6.

ISSUE:

The Department and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) propose to modify the adopted route for SR 180 in Fresno County, west of the city of Fresno. A Route Adoption Report was approved on March 5, 2013. A Final Environmental Impact Report/Tier I Environmental Impact Statement was prepared for National Environmental Protection Act and California Environmental Quality Act approval. This document was approved on March 4, 2013.

Recommended by: _____
KARLA SUTLIFF
Chief Engineer

BACKGROUND:

The purpose of this route adoption is to establish the location for an ultimate four-lane expressway for SR 180 in western Fresno County. The formal adoption of a route location for SR 180 will enable the Department and local governments to plan for future implementation of expressway segments within the corridor, provide a basis upon which compatible adjacent land uses can be defined and permitted, and protect right of way.

SR 180 is a west to east principal arterial across Fresno County serving traffic between the west side of the San Joaquin Valley and the Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks on the east. This route is a key thoroughfare for the transport of agricultural goods from ranches and farms east of Fresno, and is of growing importance for commuter travel between the Fresno-Clovis Metropolitan Area and eastern Fresno County.

SR 180 from SR 33 to SR 99 entered the State Highway System (SHS) by legislation in 1933 as Route 41. SR 180 from Interstate 5 (I-5) to SR 33 entered the SHS as Route 263 in 1963. The current legislative description of SR 180 as from “Route 5 to Route 99 passing near Mendota” was approved in 1965 and included in the California Freeway and Expressway System. However, the route alignment from I-5 to Brawley Avenue, 0.25 mile west of SR 99, was never adopted by the Commission.

The current traversable route for SR 180 is a two-lane conventional highway which begins at SR 33 in the city of Mendota. It proceeds east along Whitesbridge Avenue through the city of Kerman and the unincorporated community of Rolinda to Brawley Avenue. At Brawley Avenue, SR 180 becomes a four-lane freeway through the city of Fresno.

Currently, there is no reliable and continuous regional east-west highway between the city of Fresno and I-5. It is predicted that by year 2030, the section of SR 180 along West Whitesbridge Avenue between the cities of Kerman and Fresno will have inadequate capacity to accommodate local and regional travel demand. This section poses safety concerns due to the high percentage of trucks and agricultural vehicles that share the road with passenger vehicles. Additionally, the lack of capacity and passing lanes, along with seasonal flooding and heavy fog, contribute to travel time delays and unsafe driving conditions.

The “Route 180 Extension” project from I-5 to SR 33 was considered and recommended for approval on November 30, 1999. Governor Gray Davis included \$7 million in Transportation Congestion Relief Program funds for environmental studies to extend SR 180 westward from Mendota to I-5 in Fresno County. Research and development studies began in year 2000 to locate a workable alignment between I-5 and SR 33.

On February 21, 2003, FHWA directed the Department to extend the limits of the project easterly to connect with existing SR 180 alignment at Brawley Avenue, near the city of Fresno. Based on that direction, the Department shelved the Route 180 Extension project and proceeded on a Route Adoption Study for SR 180 from I-5 and revised eastern study limits at Brawley Avenue.

The purpose of the route adoption is to establish a route corridor so local agencies can include the corridor in the circulation element of their general plans. This will allow cities and the County to protect the corridor from future development. The route adoption will assist local agencies to make land use decisions that could preserve the corridor. In addition, the route adoption will be the basis for future projects within the adopted corridor which will improve the mobility east and west through the center of Fresno County and the San Joaquin Valley. The SR 180 Transportation Concept Report shows beyond the year 2030, the Ultimate Transportation Corridor is a four-lane expressway between the cities of Mendota and Fresno.

Although a route adoption action by the Commission only requires an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) environmental clearance under California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), a decision was made during the development of the route adoption report to produce a Tier 1 Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and Section 4(f) Evaluation under National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). The intent is to minimize the risk that the alignment could change, and the work to be done for a Tier 2 EIS during project level studies could be lessened and subsequently expedite the completion of a build project.

The proposed route adoption is necessary to allow for the ultimate construction of projects that will improve mobility east and west through the center of Fresno County and the San Joaquin Valley. These projects will provide:

- Adequate capacity for the regional movement of people and goods.
- Continuity for east-west regional travel.
- Improved accessibility and shorter travel times between Westside communities.
- Improved safety.

The proposed route adoption alignment was selected based on engineering factors, environmental analysis, and community and agency input received during the EIS public circulation period and the public hearing held on March 30, 2011. While all the route alternatives would meet the purpose and need of the project, the preferred alternative was selected for the following reasons:

- Fresno County and the City of Kerman support the proposed alignment since it minimizes disruption to Kerman's existing and planned land uses.
- Fresno County, City of Firebaugh, and City of Mendota support the proposed alignment because it would improve access to both Firebaugh and Mendota.
- Most of the comments received during the public comment period favored staying along the existing corridor to the greatest extent feasible.
- Using the existing SR 180 and West Shields Avenue corridors to the greatest extent feasible affects less prime farmland and farming operations compared to other alternatives.
- The proposed alignment uses the existing I-5 interchange at West Shields Avenue.

- The proposed alignment reduces effects to sensitive species habitats and Section 4(f) resources with measures that would avoid and/or minimize adverse effects including cumulative and growth inducement effects.

The Route Adoption Report and EIR/Tier 1EIS for the route adoption were developed in close coordination with the cities of Mendota, Kerman, Firebaugh, the County of Fresno, and the Council of Fresno County Governments. All of these agencies have strongly supported the route adoption.

If the project were to be constructed today, the estimated total capital costs are \$739 million.

Once a need for a constructible segment and potential funding is identified, project level studies will be initiated. The Department would then prepare a project level project report along with a subsequent Tier II environmental document and other approval documents like a Controlled Access Highway Agreement and requisite permits. The next phase is to prepare the plans, specifications and estimate, and construct all or part of the subsequent project(s) within the adopted route when funds are appropriated.

Existing portions of SR 180 outside of the adopted areas for the expressway proper will be relinquished to the Cities of Mendota and Kerman and to the County of Fresno following the construction of the SR 180 expressway. Details of those relinquishments will be worked out at the time construction is funded.

A Route Adoption Report was approved on March 5, 2013. A Final Environmental Impact Report/Tier I Environmental Impact Statement was prepared for National Environmental Protection Act and California Environmental Quality Act approval. This document was approved on March 4, 2013. A concurrent environmental action is on this month's agenda, see item 2.2c(23).

Attachments:

Resolution HRA 13-01
Vicinity Map
Route Adoption Map

CALIFORNIA TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION
Highway Route Adoption Resolution
6-FRE-180 PM R3.5/R53.6

Resolution HRA 13-01

WHEREAS, the California Department of Transportation (Department), with input on the project from the Cities of Mendota, Kerman, Firebaugh, the County of Fresno, and the Council of Fresno County Governments, has completed route adoption studies relative to State Highway Route 180, in Fresno County; and

WHEREAS, the Department has completed a Final Environmental Impact Report/Tier I Environmental Impact Statement prepared for National Environmental Protection Act and California Environmental Quality Act approval; and

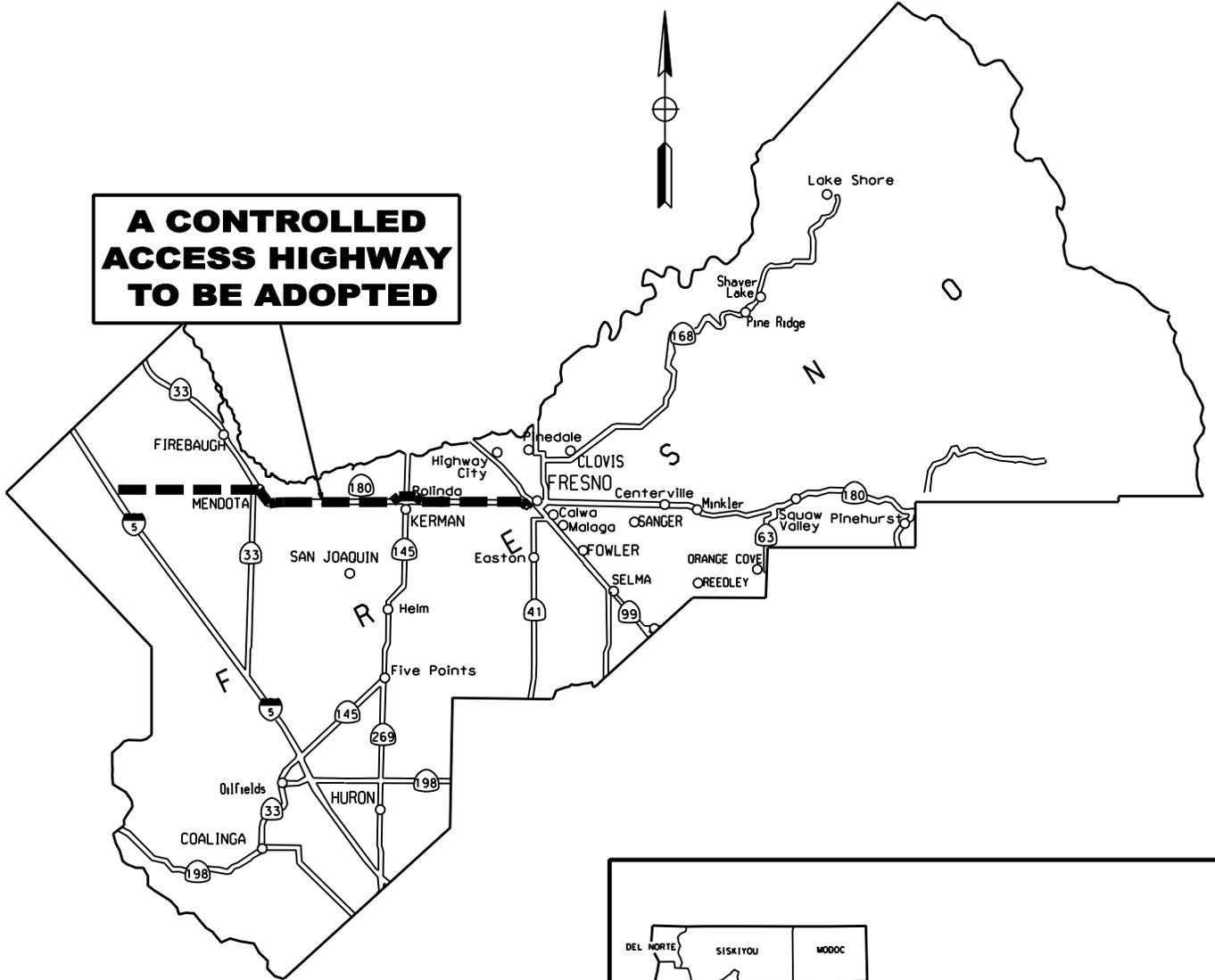
WHEREAS, the Route Adoption Report recommending the controlled access highway route adoption was approved on March 5, 2013.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the California Transportation Commission (Commission) that pursuant to the authority vested in it by law, this Commission does hereby select, adopt, and determine the location of that segment of State Highway Route 180, from Interstate 5 to Brawley Avenue, in Fresno County, and officially designate it as 6-FRE-180, a controlled access highway, as said location is shown on the map submitted by Terry L. Abbott, Chief Design Engineer; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this Commission has found and determined and hereby declares that such location of said State highway is for the best interest of the State.

VICINITY MAP

**A CONTROLLED
ACCESS HIGHWAY
TO BE ADOPTED**



**A CONTROLLED
ACCESS HIGHWAY
ROUTE ADOPTION**

**STATE ROUTE 180
06-FRE-180**

LOCATION MAP



