



**Date:** February 23, 2012

**Project No.:** 100073

**To:** Lauren Dawson

**From:** Travis Crawford

**Subject:** Golden State Corridor NEPA status

**cc:**

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This memo is intended to provide a status and overview of the environmental review process. The environmental portion of the project is divided into two components: an environmental document pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and an environmental document pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

## CEQA

A Mitigated Negative Declaration (including technical studies) was prepared and circulated for public review between December 7, 2011 and January 23, 2012. A public meeting was held on January 11, 2012 to solicit comments on the Mitigated Negative Declaration. Comment letters were received and incorporated into a Final Mitigated Negative Declaration.

The Golden State Corridor Mitigated Negative Declaration is scheduled to be adopted by Fresno COG in March 2012.

## NEPA

NEPA is required when federal funds are used for a project. It should be noted that a NEPA document cannot be approved by Fresno COG; it must be approved and adopted by the federal funding agency (it is anticipated in this case that the NEPA document will need to be processed through Caltrans on behalf of FHWA). Caltrans requires that federal funding be secured in order to have authority to review and process a NEPA document. At this point in the process, federal funds are yet to be secured and therefore Caltrans is unable to process a NEPA document.

Because many components of the CEQA and NEPA documents overlap, much of the work needed to complete the NEPA process has already been done. Each federal agency has its own set of NEPA requirements and therefore the information and analysis that was formulated during the CEQA process will need to be modified to fit the federal standards for NEPA. Caltrans has very specific format and content requirements for their NEPA process. It is estimated that we have approximately 75% of the work completed that can be used in preparing NEPA documentation. The remaining 25% will need to be prepared once federal funding is secured.

The first step in the Caltrans NEPA process is to prepare a Preliminary Environmental Study (PES) Form. This is the document that describes the federal funding, the project description, and lists the potential technical studies and level of NEPA documentation that will be required. After acceptance of the PES form from Caltrans, the various technical studies to support the NEPA document can be created. Upon completion and acceptance of the technical studies, Caltrans will process the NEPA document, anticipated to be either a Categorical Exclusion or an Environmental Assessment/FONSI (Finding of No Significant Impact).

The following technical studies have been prepared to support both CEQA and NEPA documentation:

- Noise Assessment
- Traffic Impact Study

The following technical studies have been prepared to support the CEQA document and will need to be modified and/or supplemented to support a NEPA document:

- Cultural Resources
- Biological Assessment
- Air Quality Technical Study

Additional studies may be required by Caltrans (to be determined when they review the PES form).

Also under consideration is whether or not the NEPA documentation will be prepared to cover the entire Corridor project, or if only portions of the project will be funded. The only way of preparing a NEPA document to cover the entire Corridor is if federal funding is provided for the entire project. If federal funding does not cover the entire project, but only pieces of the project, those individual projects will be subject to individual NEPA review under a similar process as described above (i.e. PES form, tech studies).