

ROD in a matter of weeks or months as is normal with most major highway projects, the FHWA and Caltrans have engaged in an extensive six-year effort to refine the proposal and to reduce and mitigate the associated impacts. This project development and decision making process has demanded flexibility and innovation to shape a proposal that FHWA finds acceptable. The resulting selected alternative has remarkably fewer and less severe impacts than those described in the FEIS. This reduction in impacts has come at the expense of increased costs and minor diminishment of transportation service as compared to the preferred alternative in the FEIS; however, the FHWA is convinced that on balance, the selected alternative represents a sound investment, one that gives adequate weight to both transportation needs and community and environmental quality.

This ROD is executed in conformance with the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations implementing NEPA and documents FHWA compliance with NEPA and all other applicable Federal statutes, regulations, and requirements. The sections that follow state the decision and provide information that has been germane in the decision making process. This information summarizes and complements information provided in numerous other documents in the project record.

DECISION

The decision is to select a modified version of the Meridian Variation Alternative as described in the FEIS. The selected alternative is named the Depressed Meridian Variation Alternative Reduced with Shift design variation. This name reflects the adoption of the general alignment of the Meridian Variation Alternative with modifications that include a reduced highway width, a shift to avoid the Short Line Villa Tract Historic District and include a commitment to further depress the highway in the El Sereno and South Pasadena area. Each modification was based on a process to reduce overall impacts of the project.

This selected alternative involves completing the State Route (SR) 710 freeway gap between Interstate 10, the San Bernardino Freeway (1-10), in the city of Alhambra and Interstate 210, the Foothill Freeway (1-210), in the city of Pasadena, a distance of 6.2 miles (4.5 miles unconstructed). The freeway will also pass through the cities of Los Angeles (El Sereno community) and South Pasadena. The freeway will have six mixed-flow lanes and two high-occupancy-vehicle (HOV) lanes. Local service interchanges will be provided at various locations (Hellman Avenue and Valley Boulevard in the city of Alhambra, Alhambra Avenue/Mission Road and Huntington Drive in the city of Los Angeles, and Del Mar Boulevard in the city of Pasadena).

The selected alternative will closely follow the alignment of the Meridian Variation Alternative identified as the preferred alternative in the FEIS. Starting on the southerly terminus at 1-10, it will follow the alignment of the existing Long Beach Freeway northerly to Valley Boulevard. From Valley Boulevard to Huntington Drive, the alignment will generally parallel and run just west of the Los Angeles city limits. North of Huntington Drive, the alignment will approximately follow Meridian Avenue to Bank Street. At this point, the alignment will shift westward and run between Orange Grove Boulevard and Prospect Street north to the Arroyo Seco Parkway. The alignment will continue to parallel the now eastward-curving alignment of Orange Grove Boulevard to the Pasadena city limits, where it will continue shifting eastward to join with Pasadena Avenue at Madeline Street. From here, the project will follow Pasadena Avenue

north to Del Mar Boulevard, where it will connect to the existing Long Beach Freeway stub connecting to 1-210/SR 134.

The freeway is depressed for about 85% of the newly constructed 4.5 mile section and is fully depressed through Pasadena and South Pasadena except for the structure over State Route 110. The freeway is depressed in virtually all of the residential areas. Approximately 25% of the 4.5 mile remaining gap closure is in cut-and-cover tunnels.

This decision adopts a comprehensive set of modifications to the Meridian Variation Alternative as described in the FEIS. FHWA and Caltrans are adopting these modifications to reduce and mitigate the impacts that would otherwise occur these modifications do not offer additional transportation service and in some cases result in a minor reduction in service. The modifications include the following measures:

- Reducing the freeway footprint by approximately 20 percent from 176' to 142'.
- Eliminating the freeway to freeway interchange between Route 710 and Route 110.
- Providing a minimum of 6 cut-and-cover tunnels at locations throughout the corridor.
- Relocating National Register eligible properties in Districts to their original locations on top of or in proximity to cut-and-cover tunnels to the extent feasible, or, alternatively, relocating them in the area where possible.
- Shifting the alignment to avoid the Short Line Villa Tract Historic District.
- Depressing the freeway at additional locations in El Sereno and South Pasadena.
- Incorporating extensive urban design and landscaping measures about one block each side of the freeway.
- Allowing no truck traffic on SR 710 between 1-10 and 1-210 except for local delivery trucks.
- Providing relocation benefits to qualified renters (renters of Caltrans owned properties), who would not normally be eligible for relocation assistance.
- Providing substantive training and job opportunities to qualified residents of the affected communities during all phases of the project.
- Establishing community design advisory groups with each of the impacted communities.
- Soundproofing and integrating the air filter system of the affected school buildings, providing the funding for temporary security and part-time custodial service at each affected school, and implementing an educational safety program in each affected school.
- Ensuring SR 710 is a candidate for the latest staging, construction and contract administration techniques to minimize construction duration and reduce storage time for structures to be relocated.

The Depressed Meridian Variation Alternative Reduced with Shift design variation is estimated to cost \$823 million in 1997 dollars. Of this amount, \$143 million is attributable to the modifications as identified in this document. In addition to the freeway elements of the - selected alternative as described above, this decision includes implementing a coordinated set of interim highway improvements. These interim highway improvements are directed at providing transportation relief in the corridor during the short term, while the freeway is being designed and constructed. A proposed set of interim improvements is described in detail in the Conditions and Commitments section of this document. The selection of interim improvements is subject to refinement through discussions among FHWA, Caltrans, SCAG, and the corridor design advisory groups. The interim highway improvements are estimated to cost approximately \$8 million, depending on the final selection of improvements for implementation.

As described above, the selected alternative is environmentally enhanced from the preferred alternative (Meridian Variation Alternative) described in the FEIS. In preparing this ROD, the FHWA evaluated whether or not the selected alternative was sufficiently different from the FEIS preferred alternative to warrant the preparation of a supplemental EIS. In conducting the Reevaluation, FHWA was guided by the provision in the FHWA/Federal Transit Administration regulation on environmental impact procedures (23 CFR §771.130) which governs the preparation of supplemental EIS's. As characterized in the latest Environmental Reevaluation (April 1998), virtually all of the modifications had as their purpose the lessening of adverse environmental impacts evaluated in the EIS. The Environmental Reevaluation further concludes that the modifications to the project do not result in new significant impacts that were not evaluated in the EIS. In accordance with the regulation, a supplemental EIS is not required under these conditions.

CONDITIONS AND COMMITMENTS

FHWA and Caltrans have agreed to a number of conditions and commitments associated with the development and implementation of the selected alternative. These measures were finalized only after the October 3, 1997 meeting and subsequent consultation with interested Members of Congress, SCAG, the corridor cities, the Council on Environmental Quality, the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, and the National Trust for Historic Preservation. On November 14, 1997 the Secretary of the Department of Transportation concurred with FHWA's "Proposed Decision" document which identified the selected alternative with preliminary conditions and commitments. The final conditions and commitments are as follows:

1. Caltrans will establish community design advisory groups (DAG) with each of the impacted communities, including El Sereno, to consider the specific community mitigation needs of their community. These mitigation measures will include, but are not limited to, additions and deletions to the interim improvement measures, traffic operations and pedestrian safety issues; school impact and mitigation measures; historic impact mitigation including measures to protect and secure relocated or replaced structures; neighborhood preservation; visual impact and urban landscape considerations including pocket parks and joint use; and community integrity and cohesion issues including structural considerations (such as pedestrian overpasses, underpasses, and cut-and-cover tunnels), relocation assistance and replacement housing, property management, construction impacts and community targeted job opportunities and training programs. The FHWA will be involved on the advisory groups and in the selection of members. Technical assistance, as needed, will be provided by Caltrans to the DAG's. Memberships on the DAG's will include local

