“Streamlined” Environmental Assessment Writing Template

**GUIDANCE**

The “Streamlined” Environmental Assessment Writing Template has been created for use for projects that have 1-2 build alternatives and for which the potential for significant effect to resources is limited. This template is created in alignment with FHWA Technical Advisory T 6640.8A *Guidance for Preparing and Processing Environmental and Section 4(f) Documents* that states:

The primary purpose of an [Environmental Assessment] EA is to help the FHWA and [highway agency] HA decide whether or not an EIS is needed. Therefore, the EA should address only those resources or features which the FHWA and the HA decide will have a likelihood for being significantly impacted. The EA should be a concise document and should not contain long descriptions or detailed information which may have been gathered or analyses which may have been conducted for the proposed action…To minimize volume, the EA should use good quality maps and exhibits and incorporate by reference and summarize background data and technical analyses to support the concise discussions of the alternatives and their impacts.

In keeping with those goals, incorporation by reference of technical studies is encouraged when using this template. According to the Council on Environmental Quality regulations, agencies can incorporate by reference analyses and information from existing documents into an EA provided the material has been appropriately cited and described, and the materials are reasonably available for review by interested parties (40 CFR 1502.21).

This writing template has been set up to assist with creating a document that is compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Guidance for what content should be included can be found in the Environmental Document Annotated Outline located on the [SER Forms and Templates page](https://dot.ca.gov/programs/environmental-analysis/standard-environmental-reference-ser/forms-templates#aos). For assistive technology users, form fields have been used to alert you to where text needs to be inserted. Should you need further accessibility assistance, please contact [env.webmaster@dot.ca.gov](mailto:env.webmaster@dot.ca.gov).

As you use this template, it is recommended to follow the instructions listed below to ensure the document remains accessible:

* Font used should be no smaller than 12-point (10-point is approved for use in tables and footnotes) and should be either Arial, Verdana, Tahoma, Calibri, or Century Gothic. This template uses a 12-point Arial default font.
* When copying text from another source, use the “Keep Text Only” paste option.
* Tables and figures should follow their title (caption). To add a caption, highlight table or figure, right click, and choose “Insert Caption.” Add title to caption box, label as table or figure and choose “Above selected item” for position. Click on “Numbering” for additional formatting; including the chapter number is recommended. By using this feature, tables and figures will auto number and will also appear in the lists of tables and figures when the lists are updated.
* Images or other items that cannot be read by a screen reader need to contain alternative text.
* Color alone should not be used to convey meaning.
* Tables should be kept simple (i.e., no merged or split cells) to avoid reading order issues.
* Refer to the Caltrans guidance for creating accessible documents for additional assistance. Non-Caltrans users should contact their local district for this guidance.

In addition, please note the following:

* The use of this writing template is not mandatory, it is provided as a work aid to assist you in creating an accessible document.
* Only use those sections which are applicable to your document. **NOTE:** the regulatory setting is optional, if included, use the language provided in the AO.
* When a section is deleted, the numbering will automatically update.
* There are a few areas where guidance or special notes have been provided, these are called out with blue font and the terms “GUIDANCE” and “NOTE.” Make sure to delete these instructions before publishing.
* Insert document name into the footer.

**Insert Project Name**

COUNTY, CALIFORNIA

DISTRICT DISTRICT –COUNTY ABBREVIATION–ROUTE (PM POSTMILES)

EA/PROJECT ID

**Environmental Assessment and** **enter Draft or Final Section 4(f) Evaluation [NOTE:** only include if there is an Individual or Programmatic Section 4(f) Evaluation**] with Finding of No Significant Impact [NOTE:** only add for “Final” EA**]**

[**GUIDANCE:** INSERT A PHOTO HERE]

**Prepared by the  
State of California, Department of Transportation  
and** **enter Local Jurisdiction if applicable**

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 May 27, 2022, and executed by FHWA and Caltrans.

****

Insert date (month and year)

General Information about This Document

**GUIDANCE:** Use this page for **DRAFT** documents. Modify the text as needed for your document.

**What’s in this document:**

The California Department of Transportation (Caltrans), as assigned by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), has prepared this Environmental Assessment (EA), which examines the potential environmental impacts of the alternatives being considered for the proposed project located in enter project location. Caltrans is the lead agency under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). The document tells you why the project is being proposed, what alternatives we have considered for the project, how the existing environment could be affected by the project, the potential impacts of each of the alternatives, and the proposed avoidance, minimization, and/or mitigation measures.

**What you should do:**

* Please read this document.
* Additional copies of this document and the related technical studies are available for review at enter the district office and/or public institution, such as a library, community center, school, etc., where the document can be viewed and provide addresses for all locations. This document may be downloaded at the following website: enter web page address.
* **NOTE:** Include as applicable: Attend the public hearing. Enter date and location of hearing if known.
* We’d like to hear what you think. If you have any comments about the proposed project, please attend the enter type of meeting [**NOTE:** See [Chapter 11, Article 7 of the PDPM](https://dot.ca.gov/programs/design/manual-project-development-procedures-manual-pdpm) for guidance] and/or send your written comments via postal mail or email to Caltrans by the deadline.
* Send comments via postal mail to:  
  Enter contact name and address
* Send comments via email to: Enter email.
* Be sure to send comments by the deadline: Enter due date.

**What happens next:**

After comments are received from the public and reviewing agencies, Caltrans, as assigned by the FHWA, may: (1) give environmental approval to the proposed project, (2) do additional environmental studies, or (3) abandon the project. If the project is given environmental approval and funding is obtained, Caltrans, or Local Agency project proponent, could design and construct all or part of the project.

**Alternative Formats:**

For individuals with sensory disabilities, this document can be made available in Braille, in large print, on audiocassette, or on computer disk. To obtain a copy in one of these alternate formats, please call or write to Caltrans, Attn: Enter contact name and address; enter phone number (Voice), or use the California Relay Service 1 (800) 735-2929 (TTY to Voice), 1 (800) 735-2922 (Voice to TTY), 1 (800) 855-3000 (Spanish TTY to Voice and Voice to TTY), 1-800-854-7784 (Spanish and English Speech-to-Speech) or 711.

General Information about This Document

**GUIDANCE:** Use this page for **FINAL** documents. Modify the text as needed for your document.

**General Information about This Document**

The California Department of Transportation (Caltrans), as assigned by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), has prepared this Environmental Assessment for the proposed project located in enter project location. Caltrans is the lead agency under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). The document tells you why the project is being proposed, what alternatives have been considered for the project, how the existing environment could be affected by the project, the potential impacts of each of the alternatives, and the proposed avoidance, minimization, and/or mitigation measures. The Draft Environmental Assessment circulated to the public for enter number days between enter date and enter date. Comments received during this period are included in enter Chapter 4 or Appendix as appropriate. Changes to the document made since the draft document circulation are shown enter description of how changes are shown. Minor editorial changes and clarifications have not been so indicated. Additional copies of this document and the related technical studies are available for review at enter the district office and/or public institution, such as a library, community center, school, etc., located at enter addresses for all locations. This document may be downloaded at the following website: enter web page address.

**Alternative Formats:**

For individuals with sensory disabilities, this document can be made available in Braille, in large print, on audiocassette, or on computer disk. To obtain a copy in one of these alternate formats, please call or write to Caltrans, Attn: Enter contact name and address; enter phone number (Voice), or use the California Relay Service 1 (800) 735-2929 (TTY to Voice), 1 (800) 735-2922 (Voice to TTY), 1 (800) 855-3000 (Spanish TTY to Voice and Voice to TTY), 1-800-854-7784 (Spanish and English Speech-to-Speech) or 711.

**TITLE SHEET GUIDANCE:**

* Modify the text on this page as appropriate for the project.
* Add an agency signature block only if the agency is involved as a joint lead agency under NEPA.

FHWA Highway ID No. if applicable SCH# Enter SCH number

Enter district-county-route-postmiles

Enter project EA

Enter project number

Enter short descriptive phrase consistent with project alternative(s) such as “widen” or “improve” or “rehabilitate” and general description of project location

**Environmental Assessment and** **enter Draft or Final Section 4(f) Evaluation [NOTE:** only include if there is an Individual or Programmatic Section 4(f) Evaluation**] with Finding of No Significant Impact [NOTE:** only add for “Final” EA**]**

Submitted Pursuant to: (State) Division 13, California Public Resources Code

(Federal) 42 USC 4332(2)(C)

[**NOTE:** If there is an Individual or Programmatic Section 4(f) Evaluation, add: 49 USC 303, and/or 23 USC 138]

THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA

Department of Transportation

and

enter Local Agency if appropriate

Cooperating Agencies: enter cooperating agencies

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  |  |  |
| Enter name  District Director  California Department of Transportation  NEPA Lead Agency |  | Date |

The following persons may be contacted for more information about this document:

Enter name, address, telephone, and email information for Caltrans and local agency contacts.

Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI)

**GUIDANCE:** This is for the “final” EA. The FONSI is prepared by Caltrans. Do not include a blank FONSI in a “draft” EA See the [Forms and Templates page](https://dot.ca.gov/programs/environmental-analysis/standard-environmental-reference-ser/forms-templates) of the Standard Environmental Reference (SER) for a sample FONSI.

Summary

**GUIDANCE:** The summary is optional for an Environmental Assessment. If a summary is included, follow the guidance provided in the Annotated Outline.

Begin typing here

Table of Contents

**GUIDANCE:** To update the table of contents (TOC), hover cursor over table and right click. Choose update field. For topics not needed, or to modify a header, delete or edit the header in the body of the document and then update the TOC.

[Chapter 1 Proposed Project 1](#_Toc89772979)

[1.1 Introduction 1](#_Toc89772980)

[1.2 Purpose and Need 1](#_Toc89772981)

[1.3 Project Description 1](#_Toc89772982)

[1.4 Project Alternatives 1](#_Toc89772983)

[1.4.1 PROPOSED BUILD ALTERNATIVES 1](#_Toc89772984)

[1.4.2 NO-BUILD (NO-ACTION) ALTERNATIVE 1](#_Toc89772985)

[1.4.3 IDENTIFICATION OF A PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE 1](#_Toc89772986)

[1.4.4 ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED BUT ELIMINATED FROM FURTHER DISCUSSION 1](#_Toc89772987)

[1.5 Permits and Approvals Needed 2](#_Toc89772988)

[Chapter 2 Project Impacts 3](#_Toc89772989)

[2.1 Resource Topics Dismissed from Analysis in Environmental Assessment 3](#_Toc89772990)

[2.2 Resource Topics Warranting Further Analysis 4](#_Toc89772991)

[2.2.1 Resource Topic 1 5](#_Toc89772992)

[2.2.2 Resource Topic 2 5](#_Toc89772993)

[2.3 Construction Impacts 5](#_Toc89772994)

[2.4 Cumulative Impacts 5](#_Toc89772995)

[Chapter 3 California Environmental Quality Act 6](#_Toc89772996)

[Chapter 4 Comments and Coordination 7](#_Toc89772997)

[Chapter 5 List of Preparers 8](#_Toc89772998)

[Chapter 6 Distribution List 9](#_Toc89772999)

[Appendix A Section 4(f) 10](#_Toc89773000)

[Individual Section 4(f) Evaluation 10](#_Toc89773001)

[Description of the Proposed Project 10](#_Toc89773002)

[Section 4(f) Properties 10](#_Toc89773003)

[Use of the Section 4(f) Property 10](#_Toc89773004)

[Avoidance Alternatives 10](#_Toc89773005)

[Measures to Minimize Harm to the Section 4(f) Property 10](#_Toc89773006)

[Least Harm Analysis and Concluding Statement 10](#_Toc89773007)

[Coordination 10](#_Toc89773008)

[Programmatic Section 4(f) Determination(s) 10](#_Toc89773009)

[Section 4(f) De Minimis Determination(s) 10](#_Toc89773010)

[Resources Evaluated Relative to the Requirements of Section 4(f): No-Use Determination(s) 11](#_Toc89773011)

[Section 6(f) 11](#_Toc89773012)

[Appendix B Title VI/Non-Discrimination Policy Statement 12](#_Toc89773013)

[Appendix C Summary of Relocation Benefits 13](#_Toc89773014)

[California Department of Transportation Relocation Assistance Program 13](#_Toc89773015)

[Appendix D Avoidance, Minimization and/or Mitigation Summary 14](#_Toc89773016)

[Appendix E Required Consultation/ Concurrence Documentation 15](#_Toc89773017)

[Appendix F Comment Letters and Responses 16](#_Toc89773018)

[Appendix G Final Determination of Engineering and Operational Acceptability 17](#_Toc89773019)

[Appendix H List of Technical Studies 18](#_Toc89773020)

[Appendix I Glossary of Technical Terms 19](#_Toc89773021)

[Appendix J List of Acronyms and Abbreviations 20](#_Toc89773022)

List of Tables

**GUIDANCE:** Include a list of tables here. Make sure to update whenever edits are made to table numbers. To update, right click on entry below and choose “Update Field.”

[**Table 2‑1: Resource Topics Dismissed from Analysis** 3](#_Toc89332910)

List of Figures

**GUIDANCE:** Include a list of figures here. Make sure to update whenever edits are made to figure numbers. To update, right click on entry below and choose “Update Field.”

To aid the public in locating maps, it is recommended to clearly show where mapping can be found, particularly for the preferred alternative (if it has been identified).

# Proposed Project

## Introduction

Begin typing here

## Purpose and Need

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## Project Description

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## Project Alternatives

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### PROPOSED BUILD ALTERNATIVES

Begin typing here

#### Transportation System Management (TSM) and Transportation Demand Management (TDM) Alternatives

**GUIDANCE:** Include only if applicable.

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#### Access to Navigable Rivers

**GUIDANCE:** Include only if applicable

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### NO-BUILD (NO-ACTION) ALTERNATIVE

Begin typing here

### IDENTIFICATION OF A PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE

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### ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED BUT ELIMINATED FROM FURTHER DISCUSSION

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## Permits and Approvals Needed

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The following permits, licenses, agreements, and certifications (PLACs) are required for project construction:

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| --- | --- | --- |
| **Agency** | **PLAC** | **Status** |
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# Project Impacts

## Resource Topics Dismissed from Analysis in Environmental Assessment

The 1992 Regulations for Implementing the Procedural Provisions of NEPA direct federal agencies to “concentrate on the issues that are truly significant to the action in question” (40 CFR 1500.1(b)), “focus on significant environmental issues” (40 CFR 1502.1), and include “only brief discussion of other than significant issues” (40 CFR 1502.2(b)). Consideration and analysis was given to the resources listed in Table 2-1 below. These resources either do not occur in the project area, or would experience negligible or no impacts as a result of the project. Therefore, they are not discussed further in this EA.

**Table 2‑1: Resource Topics Dismissed from Analysis**

| **Resource** | **Rationale for Dismissal** |
| --- | --- |
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|  |  |
|  |  |

Sample table:

**Table 2**-**1: Resource Topics Dismissed from Analysis**

| **Resource** | **Rationale for Dismissal** |
| --- | --- |
| Air Quality | Fall County is designated non-attainment by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) for ozone. Because this project would not add capacity to SR 789 and the intersection improvements would be consistent with a safety project, it is exempt from conformity per the Transportation Conformity Rule (40 CFR 93.126 and 40 CFR 93.127). Therefore, the project is not required to conform to an applicable State Implementation Plan. Standard Specifications will be followed to minimize the effects of fugitive dust on air quality during construction. |
| Economics and Employment | No long-term impacts on the local or regional economy are anticipated. Short-term, minor beneficial impacts would occur as revenue to the local economy for construction labor and materials. |
| Environmental Justice | Based on the Community Impact Assessment (January 2021), there are no minority or low-income populations within the project area. Therefore, this project is not subject to the provisions of Executive Order 12898. |
| Farmland | According to the CA Department of Conservation, some land within the project area is classified as Farmland of Local Importance as it could serve for productivity if irrigated (CA Department of Conservation 2021). However, the project will be constructed entirely within Caltrans’ existing right-of-way and no agricultural lands will be converted to non-agricultural uses. |
| Noise | No residential properties occur along the roadway within the project area that would be affected by noise. In addition, the project is not a Type I project since it is not a new facility, does not involve substantial alterations of an existing facility and does not increase capacity; the proposed project only includes modifications to turning lanes. |
| Paleontological Resources | A review of information compiled by Fall County and of geological formations in the project area revealed a very low propensity for fossils and other paleontological resources within the floodway of Crowe Creek (Caltrans Memo 2021). Given the limited area and depth of excavation within the project area (no more than 2 feet), it is highly unlikely paleontological resources would be encountered. In the event paleontological resources are encountered, the Caltrans Standard Specifications for unanticipated paleontological discoveries will be followed. |
| Section 4(f) | There are no historic sites, parks and recreational resources, wildlife or waterfowl refuges, which meet the definition of a Section 4(f) resource, within the project vicinity. Therefore, this project is not subject to the provisions of Section 4(f) of the Department of Transportation Act of 1966. (Caltrans Memo 2021). |

[End Sample]

## Resource Topics Warranting Further Analysis

**GUIDANCE:** Include a discussion of those resource topics that are truly of substantial concern for the project. FHWA Technical Advisory T 6640.8A *Guidance for Preparing and Processing Environmental and Section 4(f) Documents* does not require a separate discussion of affected environment and environmental consequences for an Environmental Assessment; however, those subsections can be used if they will help with readability of the analyses. Similarly, regulatory setting is not required but can be included. It is recommended to discuss resource topics in the same order as the annotated outline. The impact discussion for resource topics that warrant further analysis must include the applicable content in the environmental consequences subsection of a given topical area in the annotated outline. Enough detail needs to be presented to allow readers to determine the anticipated effect; however, incorporation by reference of technical studies is strongly encouraged rather than lengthy or technical text for information such as, but not limited to, study methodologies. Use incorporation by reference of the technical studies by briefly describing what information is being incorporated and then provide a citation to where that information can be found. At a minimum, cross-references to the Avoidance, Minimization and/or Mitigation Summary appendix must also be included. To add additional resource topics, type in the header name, highlight header, and choose “Heading 3” located under “Styles."

### Resource Topic 1

Begin typing here

### Resource Topic 2

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## Construction Impacts

**GUIDANCE:** Include here if not discussed for each resource area in Section 2.2.

## Cumulative Impacts

**GUIDANCE:** Include here if not discussed for each resource area in Section 2.2.

# California Environmental Quality Act

**GUIDANCE:** Include here only when preparing a joint NEPA/CEQA document. The content of this chapter should be consistent with the CEQA chapter of the applicable annotated outline. Note, the preparation of a joint NEPA/CEQA document would also require updating other items including, but not limited to, the cover sheet, general information page, title page, and Negative Declaration/Mitigated Negative Declaration page.

Caltrans does not provide oversight or approve CEQA Environmental Documents or Technical Studies for Local Assistance projects located off the State Highway System. If a joint document is prepared, District Local Assistance staff work with Local agencies to complete this chapter.

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# Comments and Coordination

Begin typing here

# List of Preparers

**GUIDANCE:** This chapter is optional but is highly recommended.

Begin typing here

# Distribution List

**GUIDANCE:** This chapter is optional but is highly recommended.

Begin typing here

1. Section 4(f)

**GUIDANCE:** Only use the sections below which apply to your project.

Individual Section 4(f) Evaluation

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Description of the Proposed Project

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Section 4(f) Properties

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Use of the Section 4(f) Property

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Avoidance Alternatives

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Measures to Minimize Harm to the Section 4(f) Property

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Least Harm Analysis and Concluding Statement

**NOTE:** This section is included in the Final ED

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Coordination

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Programmatic Section 4(f) Determination(s)

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Section 4(f) De Minimis Determination(s)

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Resources Evaluated Relative to the Requirements of Section 4(f): No-Use Determination(s)

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Section 6(f)

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1. Title VI/Non-Discrimination Policy Statement

**GUIDANCE:** Insert the most recent Title VI/Non-Discrimination Policy Statement here. The most recent version can be found on the [Caltrans Civil Rights Title VI page](https://dot.ca.gov/programs/civil-rights/title-vi).

Insert policy here

1. Summary of Relocation Benefits

California Department of Transportation Relocation Assistance Program

Begin typing here

1. Avoidance, Minimization and/or Mitigation Summary

Begin typing here

1. Required Consultation/ Concurrence Documentation

Begin typing here

1. Comment Letters and Responses

**GUIDANCE:** This appendix is for the final document and should be used if comment letters and response are not included in the Comments and Coordination Chapter.

Begin typing here

1. Final Determination of Engineering and Operational Acceptability

**GUIDANCE:** Include this appendix in the final document if applicable (i.e., the project includes Federal Highway approval of access modification). For additional information, see the “Updates on FHWA’s ‘Policy on Access to the Interstate System’” letter located on the [SER Policy Memo page](https://dot.ca.gov/programs/environmental-analysis/standard-environmental-reference-ser/policy-memos#LinkTarget_545).

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1. List of Technical Studies

The following studies and/or technical analyses have been prepared and are incorporated by reference into this Environmental Assessment and can be located at: Enter location where technical studies may be accessed.

Begin typing here

**GUIDANCE:** Include the following information with the cultural study reference:

Please note, many state and federal laws limit the disclosure of sensitive cultural and tribal resource information to the public. Additional information regarding confidentiality of these resources can be found in the [Standard Environmental Reference Volume 2](https://dot.ca.gov/programs/environmental-analysis/standard-environmental-reference-ser/volume-2-cultural-resources) in Section 3.4.13 and Section 5.3.6.

1. Glossary of Technical Terms

**GUIDANCE:** This appendix is optional.

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1. List of Acronyms and Abbreviations

**GUIDANCE:** This appendix is optional.

Begin typing here