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# Locally Sponsored Project Initiation Document (PID)

ALIGNMENT GUIDANCE *(FOR REIMBURSED WORK)*

MARCH 2024

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# 1 Introduction

The California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) is committed to leading climate action and advancing social equity in the transportation sector, consistent with the California State Transportation Agency's (CalSTA) [Climate Action Plan for Transportation Infrastructure](#) (CAPTI, 2021). CAPTI supports the [California Transportation Plan](#) (CTP) 2050 (2021) goals that work to meet the state's ambitious climate change mandates, targets, and policies set forth by Executive Order N-19-19 and N-79-20, signed by Governor Gavin Newsom in 2019 and 2020, respectively.

The key objective of the Locally Sponsored Project Initiation Document (PID) Alignment Guidance (Guidance) is to promote early collaboration and project alignment with the 10 CAPTI Guiding Principles (Appendix C) in early project initiation phase. This Guidance applies to locally sponsored project proposed on the State Highway System (SHS), where an executed cooperative agreement<sup>1</sup> or highway improvement agreement (HIA)<sup>2</sup> is required between Caltrans and the project sponsor, followed by PID development and approval.

This Guidance outlines Caltrans review process to assess CAPTI alignment on locally sponsored project starting from the pre-planning phase of a project through PID development. The alignment review is intended to promote early collaboration between Caltrans and the project sponsor and explore multimodal and climate action opportunities to enhance alignment on the proposed project. Project proposal that is determined to be conceptually aligned with CAPTI will proceed expeditiously through the review process. Project, or element(s) of the project, that may not be conceptually aligned with CAPTI will undergo additional steps to reach a suitable alignment approach.

This Guidance focuses on locally sponsored PIDs, where project is primarily funded by local agency or private entity on a reimbursed basis. This Guidance does not apply to the following:

- Project funded by the State Highway Operation and Protection Program (SHOPP), which includes maintenance and rehabilitation projects.
- Locally sponsored project within County population of less than 40,000, as identified in California Streets and Highways Code Section 2104 and Highway Users Tax Account. This is guided by the State-sponsored Non-SHOPP PID Project Nomination Guidance available [HERE](#).

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<sup>1</sup> A cooperative agreement is between Caltrans and a local agency required for all locally funded projects on the State Highway System

<sup>2</sup> A highway improvement agreement is similar to a cooperative agreement; it is entered into between Caltrans and a private entity or developer.

- Locally sponsored project that qualifies to proceed through the Design Engineering Evaluation Report (DEER) process, which combines project initiation and approval document. Refer to Chapter 9 of the [Project Development Procedure Manual](#) for further guidance.

Furthermore, the Guidance does not prevent or hinder a cooperative agreement or HIA from being executed. It also does not prevent a project from initiating PID, proceeding through project development, or the project sponsor from seeking state and federal discretionary funding. It is important to note that if the project does not address CAPTI alignment concerns during the project development process, the project risks not being prioritized for Caltrans nomination for future state and federal discretionary funding and is less likely to obtain Caltrans partnership or letter of support.

This Guidance does not supersede other Caltrans existing documents, including but not limited to, Vehicle Miles Traveled Decision Document, Complete Streets Decision Document, or PID Safety Guidance requirements, as well as other technical documents and analyses. Project must comply with all applicable Caltrans policies, standards, and guidance throughout project development.

## 1.1 PURPOSE

The purpose of this Guidance is to provide a clear and transparent process for reviewing and exploring alignment opportunities with CAPTI prior to and during PID development for project proposed on the SHS and sponsored by the local agency or private entity, where a cooperative agreement or HIA is required. The Guidance is also intended to initiate and promote early collaboration between Caltrans and the project sponsor to ensure that both parties support the alignment approach for the proposed project as it develops through the project development process.

This Guidance does not establish an alignment threshold a project must meet to proceed to PID development. However, the Guidance strives to improve a project alignment with CAPTI to the extent possible and achieve a mutual understanding between Caltrans and the project sponsor on the alignment approach moving forward.

## 2 Background

For major project<sup>3</sup> proposed on the SHS, a PID is required to be developed and approved by Caltrans before a project can be programmed and proceed to the next phase of project development, the Project Approval and Environmental Document (PA&ED) phase. The PID establishes the purpose and need of the proposed project and outlines the proposed scope and a reliable cost estimate and schedule.

All locally sponsored project initiating PID development outside of the SHOPP will undergo an alignment review, based on this Guidance, to determine conceptual alignment with the 10 CAPTI Guiding Principles and agree on an alignment approach. This Guidance outlines an alignment review process to enhance project alignment with CAPTI as early as possible in the project development process. It also promotes early conversations between Caltrans and the project sponsor to identify alignment opportunities as part of project scoping to advance state goals and priorities. This process should occur simultaneously with development of the cooperative agreement or HIA.

## 3 Locally Sponsored PID Alignment Review

Locally sponsored PIDs are developed for a variety of projects to address various multimodal transportation needs, such as safety, operational improvements, transportation management systems, access modifications, and highway facility additions and enhancements. The anticipated funding sources for project development phases, including construction phase, are commonly comprised of local funds, formula funds, and state and federal discretionary grants.

While years of collaboration often occurred amongst Caltrans, the project sponsor, and other entities in identifying and assessing needs on the SHS, the project alignment review begins when the project sponsor is ready to enter into a cooperative agreement or HIA with Caltrans to initiate a PID. This alignment review process is intended to be concurrent with development of the cooperative agreement or HIA, thus, would not hinder existing processes. The alignment review also does not propose any modifications to languages in the cooperative agreement or HIA. A key deliverable of this Guidance is a signed Project Alignment Memo by the District Director.

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<sup>3</sup> The CTC has the authority to define the dollar amount that distinguishes a major project from a minor project. It uses this authority to change that amount as conditions require. Check with the Program Management Unit or the Design Coordinator for the most current limits. [Project Development Procedures Manual, Article 2]

### 3.1 ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

A robust collaboration among Caltrans District and Headquarter (HQ) staff and the project sponsor is paramount in the success of the alignment review under this Guidance. While there may be other parties involved, depending on the project, this Guidance focuses on the following key roles & responsibilities:

- **Project Sponsor:** The project sponsor is the local agency or private entity/developer sponsoring the proposed project, initiates the project proposal, and requests to enter into a cooperative agreement or HIA with Caltrans. The project sponsor provides all necessary and relevant project information to the District to begin the alignment review and participates in the decision-making process on an alignment approach for the project.
- **Caltrans District:** The [District Investment Planning Manager \(IPM\)](#), or designee, is the District point of contact throughout the alignment review process. The District IPM coordinates with other relevant District functions to review the proposed project for conceptual alignment and submits the project information to HQ Office Corridor & System Planning. The District IPM will work directly with the project sponsor, other District functions (Project Management, PID Office, etc.) and Caltrans HQ to assess alignment, prepare recommendations to improve alignment, if necessary, work with the project sponsor on an alignment approach, prepare the alignment memo for HQ review and concurrence, and obtain the District Director signature for the alignment memo.
- **Caltrans HQ:** The PID Nomination Program Manager in the HQ Office of Corridor & System Planning is the HQ point of contact throughout the alignment review process in working closely with District IPM to facilitate alignment discussion, explore recommendations, if necessary, review the draft alignment memo, and ensure the alignment approach agreed by all parties are consistent with the PID.

### 3.2 DISTRICT COORDINATION

Prior to initiating the alignment review process, Caltrans District should collaborate with the project sponsor early and often regarding corridor needs and consideration of CAPTI principles in all planning efforts. The comprehensive multimodal corridor planning should include a range of multimodal improvements and other strategies that support CTP 2050 goals and CAPTI principles. The project should also be included in a Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) prior to initiating a PID, or in the process on being included in the RTP at the time of requesting PID development.

The project sponsor may also consider pursuing the Sustainable Transportation Planning Grants to explore project proposals and reference those documents when initiating a cooperative agreement. Supporting documents can include:

- Comprehensive Multimodal Corridor Plan, or equivalent Planning Document
- District Caltrans Active Transportation Plans
- Caltrans District Adaptation Priority Reports
- Other local and regional plans

### 3.3 PROJECT ALIGNMENT REVIEW PROCESS

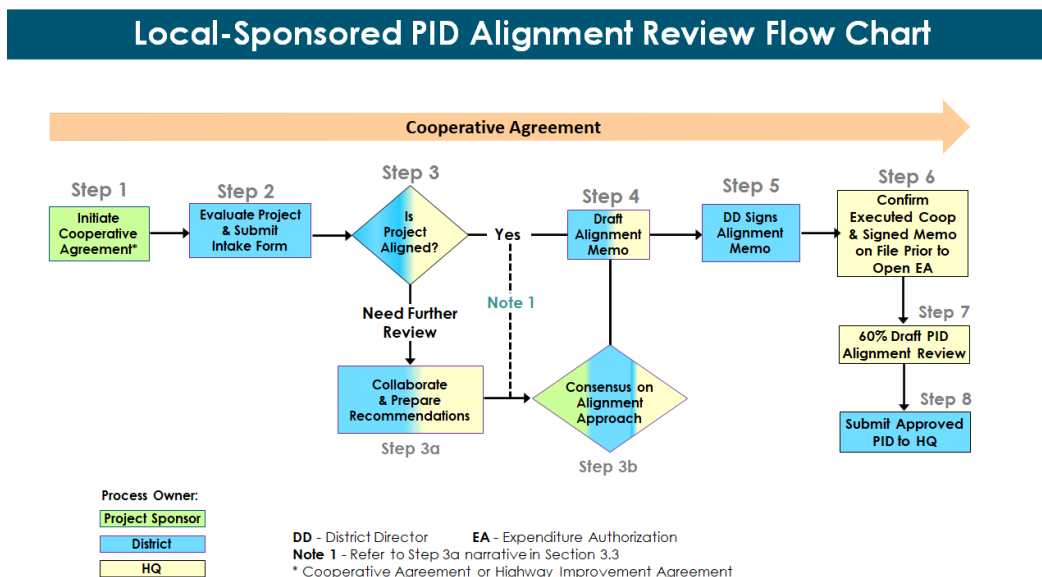
The alignment review process starts when a project sponsor notifies Caltrans of their intent to enter into a cooperative agreement or HIA to initiate PID development for a project on the SHS. The District IPM coordinates with project sponsor to gather relevant project information to assess CAPTI alignment and may consult with other District and HQ functions to determine if the project is conceptually aligned with CAPTI. [Appendix A – Project Conceptual Alignment table](#) provides a list of project types and elements that are conceptually aligned with CAPTI and those that need further review. *The list is not comprehensive, subject to change, and serves only as a guide and does not replace the need for a thorough assessment of the proposed project.*

If a project contains element(s) that may not conceptually align with CAPTI, the project as a whole is subject to further review and will undergo additional steps to explore opportunities to improve alignment. Project under review should consider other factors, including but not limited to, context sensitive solutions, rural, local and regional context, supply chain, the overall network or corridor, and potential harm or benefits to disadvantaged communities.

The alignment review process does not preclude any alternatives from being studied during PID development. Rather, the alignment review and recommendations will supplement all feasible alternatives being explored.

Figure 1, Locally Sponsored PID Alignment Review Flow Chart, illustrates the various steps in the review process.

Figure 1 – Locally Sponsored PID Alignment Review Flow Chart



The roles and actions of each step in Figure 1 are described below. While each step outlines specific roles, the entire process is intended to be collaborative involving the project sponsor and Caltrans District/HQ functions, as appropriate.

- 1. Initiate Cooperative Agreement/HIA (Project sponsor):** The project sponsor notifies their Caltrans District, typically Program/Project Management (PPM), of their intent to initiate a project on the SHS and enter into a cooperative agreement/HIA with Caltrans to develop a PID. The project sponsor provides District the required project information and other relevant factors to consider, such as geographic context, and any supporting planning documents.
- 2. Evaluate Project & Submit Intake Form (District):** Caltrans District IPM leads the review in evaluating the project purpose and need and preliminary scope and determining the project’s conceptual alignment. Refer to *Appendix A - Project Conceptual Alignment* for a list of projects to guide the assessment. It is recommended that the District IPM consults with other District and HQ programs and functions in this review process and consider other relevant factors when determining conceptual alignment, such as geographic & rural context, safety, emergency evacuation, supply chain, overall network, community needs, etc.



Based on the outcome of the District evaluation, the District IPM will assign a preliminary determination as either Conceptually Aligned or Need Further Review. A project proposal, or any elements of the project, that is determined to not be conceptually aligned will “need further review.” The District IPM then completes the Locally Sponsored PID Project Intake Form (Appendix B) and submits to HQ for review and concurrence.

3. **Is Project Aligned (HQ & District):** Once HQ receives the Intake Form, including all relevant information, HQ PID Nomination Program Manager coordinates with the District and consults with Caltrans subject matter experts<sup>4</sup>, as appropriate, to evaluate the project information and district alignment determination. The HQ PID Nomination Program Manager may request additional information to confirm District alignment determination.

Conceptually Aligned: Project that is confirmed to be conceptually aligned with CAPTI will receive HQ concurrence and proceed to Step 4.

Need Further Review: Project that needs further review will proceed to Step 3a to further assess conceptual alignment with CAPTI and explore potential opportunities to improve alignment.

**3a. Collaborate & Prepare Recommendations (HQ & District):** HQ PID Nomination Program Manager will coordinate with District IPM and relevant District and HQ programs to review the project and District assessment. *If upon further review it was determined the proposed project is conceptually aligned, the project will skip Step 3b and proceed to Step 4 (Figure 1, Note 1). This should be a collective determination between District and HQ, in coordination with the project sponsor.*

If further review confirms the project is not conceptually aligned, HQ PID Nomination Program Manager will coordinate with relevant District and HQ subject matter experts to explore alignment opportunities. These alignment opportunities become alignment recommendations that District will present to the project sponsor to consider in project scoping during PID development. Exploring alignment opportunities should take into consideration the geographic/rural context and constraints, safety needs, emergency evacuation, supply chain, overall network, community needs, etc.

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<sup>4</sup> Subject Matter Experts include, but not limited to, Caltrans HQ/District Division of Transportation Planning (Active Transportation & Complete Streets, Air Quality & Climate Change, Technical Freight & Project Planning, etc.), Caltrans HQ/District Office of Sustainability, Caltrans HQ/District Office of Traffic Operations, Caltrans HQ/District Office of Traffic Safety, Caltrans HQ/District Division of Environmental, etc.

**3b. Consensus on Alignment Approach:** The District IPM will work with District PPM and/or the PID Manager to present the recommendations to the project sponsor. Since the recommendations are intended to improve alignment when incorporated in the project scope early in the PID phase, this step should involve other Caltrans HQ and District functions, as appropriate, to reach a consensus on the alignment approach. A consensus may be consideration of all recommendations during PID development, consideration of certain recommendations and not others, or deferring certain recommendations as future consideration as the project develops.

It is important that in this step, all parties involved support the overall alignment approach and that the rationale for the approach is well documented in the alignment memo, including statements of potential risks if the project is not aligned as it develops.

Lack of Consensus on Alignment Approach: If Caltrans and the project sponsor are unable to reach a consensus on the alignment approach, the matter should be elevated to executive management from Caltrans (HQ/District) and the project sponsor, as necessary, to resolve areas of concerns. If the resolution process does not result in a consensus, the alignment memo should document the project sponsor's preferred alignment approach and Caltrans' recommended alignment approach, including justifications for each approach and potential risks if the project continues to not be in alignment as it develops.

4. **Draft Alignment Memo (District & HQ):** The District IPM prepares a draft alignment memo (Appendix D) for review and concurrence by HQ PID Nomination Program Manager. The alignment memo is to document the alignment review and outcomes, which acknowledges that a thorough alignment discussion occurred between Caltrans and the project sponsor.

The draft alignment memo should contain the information below, as applicable, and submitted to HQ for review and concurrence.

- Proposed project location, scope/elements, and purpose & need
- Conceptual alignment determination, including justifications
- Element(s) of the proposed project that may not align with CAPTI
- Recommendations to improve alignment with CAPTI
- Alignment approach, including justifications and potential risks. If there is no consensus on the alignment approach, the memo should document the project sponsor's preferred alignment and Caltrans' recommended alignment approach, including justifications for each and potential risks.

5. **District Director Signs Alignment Memo (District):** Once HQ concurs with the alignment memo, the District finalizes the memo for District Director signature. While it is ideal, it is not required that the alignment memo is signed prior to the cooperative agreement/HIA being executed. The District will submit a copy of the signed alignment memo and executed cooperative agreement/HIA to the HQ Office of Project Planning. The signed alignment memo becomes part of the project file as the project continues through the project development process.
6. **Open Phase for Charging (HQ):** HQ Office of Project Planning processes the project for PID phase charging. Both the signed memo and executed coop are required to open the phase for charging.
7. **60% Draft PID Alignment Review (HQ):** HQ PID Nomination Program Manager reviews all locally sponsored PIDs at 60% completion (draft PID) to ensure the draft PID is consistent with the alignment memo. Caltrans acknowledges there may be further scope refinements as the PID is finalized. It is important that Caltrans and the project sponsor are communicating throughout PID development to ensure a transparent and collaborative process.

If the 60% review reveals inconsistencies between the draft PID and the alignment memo, HQ PID Nomination Program Manager will work with the District and project sponsor to resolve the inconsistencies in a timely manner. A resolution should involve revisions in the PID that resolve the inconsistencies. If the matter cannot be resolved, HQ PID Nomination Program Manager will document the inconsistencies, including decisions and actions taken, share the documentation with the District and project sponsor, and maintain the document as part of the project file for future reference. Documentation method should utilize existing process, which may change and evolve over time.

8. **Submit Approved PID to HQ (District):** Once the PID is approved, the District sends a copy of the signed PID to the HQ PID Nomination Program Manager and the Office of Project Planning.

## 4 Guidance Implementation

As the project begins the PA&ED phase, the Project Development Team must ensure the alignment approach outlined in the alignment memo and any subsequent decisions related to alignment are implemented in the project. Project that does not address relevant policy alignment during the project development process may be at risk of not being prioritized for Caltrans nomination for future state & federal discretionary funding and also at risk of not receiving Caltrans letter of support or partnership. Conversely, project that is CAPTI aligned is not guaranteed future Caltrans nominations for discretionary funding since those considerations are subject to an independent evaluation and prioritization process specific to the funding program, per the [Caltrans System Investment Strategy](#).

The Guidance will be evaluated for effectiveness over time and specific adjustments may be made to incorporate lessons-learned and best practices to ensure a meaningful and practical implementation. Therefore, this Guidance is subject to future updates on an as-needed basis to maintain effectiveness and consistency with State goals and Caltrans policies.

Additional resources related to this Guidance is available on the [Corridor and System Planning](#) webpage, under Technical Resources, Tools, and Training.

# Appendices

## APPENDIX A – PROJECT CONCEPTUAL ALIGNMENT TABLE

The latest Project Conceptual Alignment Table is accessible on the [Corridor and System Planning](#) webpage, under Technical Resources, Tools, and Training. The Table is subject to updates as needed.

## APPENDIX B – LOCALLY SPONSORED PID PROJECT INTAKE FORM

The [Smartsheet Intake Form](#) is internal to Caltrans and will be completed by the District. Below is the required information for the Intake Form.

### Project Information

1. District
2. EA (if available)
3. Project ID (if available)
4. County
5. Route
6. Begin Post Mile
7. End Post Mile
8. Project Name
9. Project Location (Brief Description)
10. Project Work Description (Include detailed scope elements and features, if available, including approximate lengths and quantities)
11. Project Preliminary Purpose & Need (if available)

### District Alignment Determination

12. After the proposed project has been reviewed, please select the District determination regarding CAPTI alignment. Please refer to Appendix A - Project Conceptual Alignment table of the Locally Sponsored PID Alignment Guidance.
13. Please select one or more of the 10 CAPTI Guiding Principles the project is potentially aligned with.
14. Provide a brief justification for the District alignment determination. You may reference the project proposal from the Project Conceptual Alignment Table (Appendix A). Include context consideration, such as rural, geographic, socio-economic, completion of a corridor, etc.
15. If the project "needs further review," provide district recommendations to improve alignment, if available. If District needs consultant with HQ to prepare recommendations, enter "Request consultation with HQ."
16. Is this project in a currently approved Regional Transportation Plan (RTP)?
17. If the project is currently not in the RTP, when will the project be included?

### Local Agency Contact

18. Local Agency
19. Local Agency Contact Name (First, Last)
20. Local Agency Phone Number
21. Local Agency Email

### District Contact

22. District Contact Name (First, Last)
23. Working Title (i.e. Investment Planning Manager)
24. District Contact Phone Number

### 25. File Upload

## APPENDIX C – 10 CAPTI GUIDING PRINCIPLES

1. **Building toward an integrated, statewide rail and transit network**, centered around the existing California State Rail Plan that leverages the California Integrated Travel Project to provide seamless, affordable, multimodal travel options in all context, including suburban and rural settings, to all users.
2. **Investing in networks of safe and accessible bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure**, particularly by closing gaps on portions of the State Highway System that intersect local active transportation and transit networks or serve as small town or rural main streets, with a focus on investments in low-income and disadvantaged communities throughout the state.
3. **Investments in light, medium, and heavy-duty zero-emission vehicle (ZEV) infrastructure** as part of larger transportation projects. Support the innovation in and development of the ZEV market and help ensure ZEVs are accessible to all, particularly to those in more rural or remote communities.
4. **Strengthening our commitment to social and racial equity by reducing public health and economic harms and maximizing community benefits** to disproportionately impacted disadvantaged communities, low-income communities, and Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) communities, in urbanized and rural regions, and involve these communities early in decision-making. Investments should also avoid placing new or exacerbating existing burdens on these communities, even if unintentional.
5. **Making safety improvements to reduce fatalities and severe injuries of all users towards zero** on our roadways, railways and transit systems by focusing on context appropriate speeds, prioritizing vulnerable user safety to support mode shift, designing roadways to accommodate for potential human error and injury tolerances, and ultimately implementing a safe systems approach.
6. **Assessing physical climate risk** as standard practice for transportation infrastructure projects to enable informed decision making, especially in communities that are most vulnerable to climate-related health and safety risks.
7. **Promoting projects that do not significantly increase passenger vehicle travel**, particularly in congested urbanized settings where other mobility options can be provided and where projects are shown to induce significant auto travel. These projects should generally aim to reduce VMT and not induce significant VMT growth. When addressing congestion, consider alternatives to highway capacity expansion, such as providing multimodal options in the corridor, employing pricing strategies, and using technology to optimize operations.
8. **Promoting compact infill development while protecting residents and businesses from displacement** by funding transportation projects that support housing for low-income residents near job centers, provide walkable communities, and address affordability to reduce the housing-transportation cost burden and auto trips.
9. **Developing a zero-emission freight transportation system** that avoids and mitigates environmental justice impacts, reduces criteria and toxic air pollutants, improves freight's economic competitiveness and efficiency, and integrates multimodal design and planning into infrastructure development on freight corridors.
10. **Protecting natural and working lands** from conversion to more intensified uses and enhance biodiversity by supporting local and regional conservation planning that focuses development where it already exists and align transportation investments with conservation priorities to reduce transportation's impact on the natural environment.



**CAPTI**  
Climate Action Plan for  
Transportation Infrastructure



## APPENDIX D – PROJECT ALIGNMENT MEMO TEMPLATE

*The memo content below serves as a guide. Please use your District memo template.*

### **Memorandum**

**To:** Project sponsor Agency Name  
Organization

**Date:** Month date, year  
**File:** Optional—delete

**From:** NAME (ALL CAPS)  
Title  
Division/District

**Subject:** **PROJECT ALIGNMENT FOR [PROJECT TITLE]**

The California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) has reviewed the [Project Title] (Project) proposed by [Project Sponsor Agency Name]. Based on the information provided, Caltrans concurs with development of the Project Initiation Document as identified in Cooperative Agreement [number].

#### **Suggested Languages (select one or combination)**

[The proposed Project, as presented, is determined to be conceptually aligned with the Climate Action Plan for Transportation Infrastructure (CAPTI)] for the following reasons:

**OR** [The proposed Project, as presented, is determined to not be conceptually aligned with the Climate Action Plan for Transportation Infrastructure (CAPTI)] for the following reasons:

[Caltrans and Project Sponsor agreed to consider these recommendations during PID development to improvement alignment with CAPTI.]

[The following scope elements may not be in alignment with CAPTI and will be further explored and addressed as the project develops.]

Please ensure the Project continues to address CAPTI alignment in project scoping and development process. If the Project does not address relevant policy alignment moving forward, the Project may be at risk of not being considered for Caltrans nomination, partnership, or a letter of support for future state and federal discretionary programs.

This memo does not guarantee funding or approval of future phases of the project. Caltrans consideration of the Project for future state and federal discretionary funding, letter of support, or partnership for discretionary programs is subject to a separate evaluation and nomination process.

We look forward to our continued collaboration as the Project develops.



*APPROVAL RECOMMENDED*

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NAME  
District Director

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Date

Attachments (if applicable)