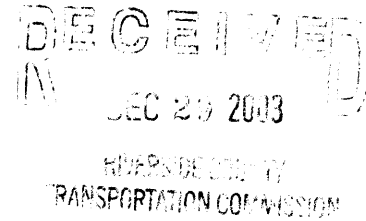




UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
 REGION IX
 75 Hawthorne Street
 San Francisco, CA 94105-3901

December 19, 2003



Maiser Khaled
 Federal Highway Administration
 California Division
 650 Capitol Mall, Suite 4-100
 Sacramento, CA 95814

Subject: Concurrence on the Purpose and Need for the State Route 79 Realignment Project, Riverside County, California.

Dear Mr. Khaled:

This responds to a request for concurrence on the Purpose and Need that was submitted on October 27, 2003. This request is pursuant to Appendix A of the National Environmental Policy Act/Clean Water Act Section 404 Integration Process Memorandum of Understanding (NEPA/404 MOU).

EPA concurs with the project Purpose and Need as presented in the document entitled, "Purpose and Need, State Route 79 Project," dated December 18, 2003. We support the concise purpose statement presented below, which will be used to help develop and screen the alternatives that will be evaluated in an environmental impact statement.

The purpose of the proposed transportation action in the cities of San Jacinto and Hemet, and unincorporated Riverside County is to construct a realigned SR 79 facility between Domenigoni Parkway and Gilman Springs Road that will increase capacity to facilitate the regional movement of people and goods for the planning design year of 2030, enhance safety, and protect right-of-way needed for the SR 79 facility improvements.

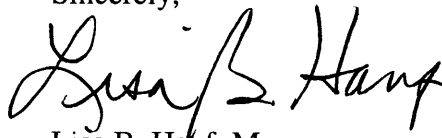
More specifically, the selected alternative for the proposed Project will:

- *Provide a segment of SR 79 that will more effectively connect Domenigoni Parkway and Gilman Springs Road.*
- *Address the east-west and north-south through traffic that exists on the shared segment of SR 74 and SR 79.*
- *Be a limited access facility.*
- *Accommodate Surface Transportation Assistance Act (STAA) National Network for oversize trucks.*
- *Provide a facility that is compatible with a future multimodal transportation system.*

The next step in the NEPA/404 Integration Process is to identify a set of screening criteria that will facilitate the selection of alternatives for evaluation pursuant to both NEPA and Section 404. Under Appendix A of the NEPA/404 MOU, we will be asked to concur on both the screening criteria and the range of alternatives.

We appreciate the opportunity to participate in the NEPA/404 MOU process. If you have any questions, please contact Liz Varnhagen of my staff at (415) 972-3845 or varnhagen.liz@epa.gov, or Mary Butterwick in the Water Division at (415) 972-3481 or butterwick.mary@epa.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Lisa B. Hanf". The signature is fluid and cursive, written over a white background.

Lisa B. Hanf, Manager
Federal Activities Office

cc: Stephanie Hall and Robert Smith, Corps of Engineers, Los Angeles
Doreen Stadlander, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Carlsbad
Gustavo Quintero, Riverside County Transportation Commission, Riverside
Marie Petry, Caltrans District 8, San Bernardino