

Appendix I Wetlands Only Practicable
Alternative Finding

Pursuant to Executive Order 11990 – Protection of Wetlands

ALTERNATIVES:

The Preferred Alternative for the Jepson Parkway Project is Alternative B. This Alternative would provide a four-lane divided arterial for the 12-mile-long corridor between Orange Drive in the north and the SR 12/Walters Road intersection in the south by widening existing Leisure Town Road, Vanden Road, Cement Hill Road, and Walters Road, and constructing a northern extension of Walters Road between Cement Hill Road and Air Base Parkway; a grade separation (overpass) of the UPRR mainline tracks as part of the Walters Road Extension; improvements such as bridge widening or culvert extensions at the Leisure Town Road crossings of Alamo Creek, New Alamo Creek, and Union Creek; a new overcrossing of McCoy Creek and McCoy detention pond; new bicycle and pedestrian paths; landscaping; and relocation of existing utilities (see Section 2.2.2).

Under the Preferred Alternative, the project would involve new fill amounting to 2.70 acres in seasonal wetlands and 4.69 acres in vernal pools including 3.02 acres of suitable habitat for Contra Costa goldfields, as well as 2.0 acres of Gairdner's yampah, and 1.0 acre of Pappose spikeweed from the widening of existing roadways and the extension of Walters Road.

There would be no effect on wetlands or vernal pools under Alternative A, the No-Build Alternative, but this alternative is not practicable because it would not address the project purpose and need and would result in worsening congestion along the local roadway network, I-80, and SR12; exacerbate safety conditions by diverting ever larger amounts of local travel to Interstate and State facilities; and fail to support multi-modal alternatives, such as transit and non-motor travel. Alternative E would fill 0.30 acres of seasonal wetlands and 0.96 acres of vernal pools, but is not practicable because it would use land from Al Patch Park and Will C. Wood High School, which is protected under Section 4(f) of the DOT Act, and it would provide above-ground visual access to facilities at Travis Air Force Base, creating a risk for homeland defense. Alternative D would fill 0.91 acres of seasonal wetlands and 1.45 acres of vernal pools, but is not practicable because it would displace industrial and commercial properties resulting in the loss of some 224 jobs, which would adversely affect the local economy and is unacceptable to the community. Alternative C would fill 0.91 acres of seasonal wetlands and 1.45 acres of vernal pools, but is not practicable because it also would create a risk for homeland defense by providing above-ground visual access to facilities at Travis Air Force Base, and because it would impact areas along Air Base Parkway that have been dedicated to propagation and preservation of Contra Costa goldfields and other special status plants (see Section 3.15.3.3).

STA and Caltrans have reviewed various alignment alternatives to identify a Walters Road extension alignment that would avoid seasonal wetlands and vernal pools. It is not possible to avoid crossing the wetlands and vernal pools entirely because of their location with respect to the existing Cement Hill Road and Walters Road. Bridging these areas entirely would have been prohibitively expensive given the length of structure required.

MEASURES TO MINIMIZE HARM:

The project has been designed to minimize impacts to wetlands and vernal pools within the project corridor. Widening has been accomplished to one side of the roadway to avoid or reduce impacts wherever possible. The alignment of the proposed Walters Road extension has been adjusted to minimize impacts, and bridge structures have been incorporated to avoid major water bodies and interrupting drainages. Design plans incorporate measures to maintain the flow of water onto the remaining sites. All seasonal wetland/vernal pool areas disturbed during construction will be fully restored following construction activities. The development of restoration plans will be coordinated with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. Seasonal wetland/vernal pool and other waters adjacent to the project that can be avoided during construction will be designated as Environmentally Sensitive Areas.

FINDING:

Based on the considerations reported above, it is determined that there is no practicable alternative to the proposed new construction in wetlands and that the proposed action includes all practicable measures to minimize harm to wetlands that may result from such construction.