

## 4.1 LAND USE AND AGRICULTURAL RESOURCES

The information presented below is summarized from the Community Impact Assessment (CIA, 2004) prepared for the North Connector Project (Project), as well as engineering studies, field reviews, and meetings with local agency staff. This section addresses direct and indirect land use impacts, construction-related land use impacts, farmlands and impacts to farmlands, and consistency with plans and policies. The CIA is available for public review at the Solano Transportation Authority (STA), One Harbor Center, Suite 130, Suisun City, CA 94585, during normal business hours.

### Methodology

Data used to characterize the Project study area were obtained primarily from the City of Fairfield (City) and Solano County (County) general plans, the Draft Environmental Impact Report (Draft EIR) for the Comprehensive Amendment to the City of Fairfield General Plan (Jones & Stokes, 2001), the Final Agricultural Conservation Easement Plan prepared for the Solano Land Trust (SLT), site visits, and review of aerial photographs (Stott Planning Associates, 2002).

## EXISTING CONDITIONS

### Land Uses

The Project is located primarily in an unincorporated portion of Solano County and the City of Fairfield, north of Interstate 80 (I-80) in the Suisun Valley and Green Valley areas. Solano Community College, Cordelia, and Old Town Cordelia (which is in unincorporated Solano County), are all located in the Project vicinity. The portion of Green Valley, located within the City of Fairfield, is a rapidly developing community with residential and commercial uses that are located near the junction of two major freeways (I-80 and Interstate 680 [I-680]) and one highway (State Route 12 [SR12]). A description of development trends in this region is included by location as follows.

#### West End

Major land uses in the West End (see Figure 3-4 in Chapter 3.0 Project Description) include grazing land and several rural residential uses that include farm-related buildings (barns and out buildings). In the surrounding areas (within the City of Fairfield), newer residential land uses are located to the north along Mangels Boulevard. An office and commercial development is located along Business Center Drive to the east. Commercial and industrial land uses are found south of SR12 and west along Red Top Road at I-80.

#### East End

The predominant land use in the East End (see Figure 4.1-2) is agriculture, located on lands designated as *intensive agricultural lands* in the Solano County General Plan. Amongst the agricultural parcels are several residences and businesses (e.g., Green Valley Tractor and Moore Tractor) and the Fairfield Linear Park (Linear Park), which is located within the Project area. The Linear Park consists of a 40 to 100-foot wide landscaped right of way within which is an 8 to 10-foot wide paved multi-use path. The Linear Park is discussed in detail in section 4.12 Public Services and Recreation. Land uses south of I-80 and adjacent to Chadbourne Road include commercial and industrial uses.

Similar to the West End and notwithstanding development in the East End, the County has placed emphasis on retaining and preserving rural and agricultural land uses within the

County. In areas to the west within the City of Fairfield, new commercial and office development has been occurring along Suisun Valley Road, Mangels Boulevard, and Business Center Drive. This trend is continuing in areas to the east of Suisun Valley Road to Suisun Creek where the City has recently approved a large mixed-use development (Fairfield Corporate Commons Project) that will be constructed over the next several years.

## **Agricultural Resources**

This section provides a general discussion of the agricultural resources and character of agriculture in the Project area. The Project area studied for agricultural resources differs from that of other issue areas in that it encompasses the entire area of each parcel containing farmland that the Project would traverse. This approach takes into account the overall parcel size required for sustainable farming practices and the potential for creation of non-farmable portions of existing parcels.

The California Department of Conservation Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program (FMMP) defines farmland according to four types: 1) *Prime Farmland* is the land with the best physical and chemical features able to sustain long-term production of crops. 2) *Farmland of Statewide Importance* is land which is similar to Prime Farmland but has minor faults, such as slopes or not as much ability to store soil moisture as Prime Farmland. 3) *Unique Farmland* has lower quality soils which are used for the production of the state's leading crops. This land may be irrigated or include non-irrigated orchards or vineyards. 4) *Grazing Land* has existing vegetation that is suitable for livestock.<sup>1</sup>

In the West End, the Solano County General Plan Land Use map designates most of the lands between Business Center Drive and State Route 12 as *Low density residential* with a portion of the lands within the project area north of SR12 and all the land south of SR12 designated *Extensive Agricultural lands*.<sup>2</sup> None of the land in the West End is designated as Prime Farmland. The lands in the West End are predominately used for non-irrigated agricultural activities such as livestock grazing.

In the East End between Suisun Creek and Abernathy Road, the Solano County General Plan Land Use Map designates lands north of the I-80 as *intensive agriculture*. The land in this area is also designated by the California Department of Conservation FMMP as Prime Farmland.<sup>3</sup> Within the East End Project area, there are 262.96 acres of Prime Farmland. Much of the land in the East End is used for agriculture including row and orchard crops. Several parcels include residential and agricultural-related structures (barns and storage buildings). Several parcels have been developed with non-agricultural, but related uses such as farm equipment dealerships.

### Williamson Act

The California Land Conservation Act of 1965, also known as the Williamson Act, provides incentives to continue agricultural production by offering property tax reductions. The main purpose of the Williamson Act is to preserve agricultural land, encourage open space preservation, and efficient urban growth. The Williamson Act provides incentives to landowners through reduced property taxes to deter the early conversion of agricultural and

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<sup>1</sup> Final Agricultural Conservation Easement Plan, Prepared by Stott Planning Associates for Solano Land Trust, August 2002.

<sup>2</sup> Solano County Land Use and Circulation Element, December 1980 as amended through December 2004, page 32.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

open space lands to other uses. Contracts under the Williamson Act specify that the landowners not convert the land to non-agricultural uses for at least a 10-year period. At the end of each year within the 10-year contract period, the contract is automatically renewed for an additional year, unless the landowner or the local government terminates this automatic renewal through the recordation of a notice of non-renewal. In 2007, there were 265,629 acres of land held under Williamson Act contracts in Solano County.<sup>4</sup> According to the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program, California Department of Conservation Division of Land Resources Protection, in 2006 there was 360,562 acres of agricultural land in Solano County. Grazing Land made up 202,826 acres of this total.<sup>5</sup>

Over 455 acres of land in Williamson Act contract is located in the Project area (East and West End combined).<sup>6</sup>

As shown in Table 4.1-1, there are eight Williamson Act contracts within the Project area, all of which are located on unincorporated County land:

*West End*

- Contract 1100 is located north of SR12 and I-80 and consists of a 42.23 acre parcel (APN 0148-270-340).
- Contract 97 is located north of SR12 and Red Top Road and consists of a 256.1 acre parcel (APN 0148-260-010) and a 12.8 acre parcel (APN 0148-270-010).

*East End*

- Contract 739 is located east of Suisun Creek and consists of a 58.84-acre parcel (APN 0027-251-330) and a 17.29-acre parcel (APN 0027-271-060).
- Contract 480 is located east of Russell Road and west of Abernathy Road and consists of a total of 12.25 acres (APN 0027-510-150 and APN 0027-510-160)
- Contract number 437 is located south of Rockville Road and consists of a 14.89-acre parcel (APN 0027-510-120).
- Contract 1198 is located west of Abernathy Road and consists of a 13.87-acre parcel (APN 0027-510-130).
- Contract 401 is located south of Rockville Road and consists of a 10.5-acre parcel (APN 0150-270-030) and a 5.09-acre parcel (APN 0027-510-180).
- Contract 2 is located immediately north and northwest of the Abernathy Road off-ramp and consists of a 7.85-acre parcel (APN 0150-270-050).

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<sup>4</sup> Matt Walsh, Department of Resource Management, Solano County. E-mail correspondence, 2007.

<sup>5</sup> Table A-38, Solano County, 2004-2006 Land Use Conversion table, Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program, California Department of Conservation, Division of Land Resources Protection.

<sup>6</sup> Williamson Act Contract 620 (APN 0027-251-420, 0027-251-440) is located nearby the alignment but this area is not currently in agricultural use and is therefore not included in the total.

**Table 4.1-1. Williamson Act Contracts in the Project Area**

| <b>Assessor Parcel Number #</b>               | <b>Contract Number</b> | <b>Total Acres in Contract</b> |
|---|------------------------|--------------------------------|
| <b>West End</b>                               |                        |                                |
| 0148-270-340                                  | 1100                   | 42.23                          |
| 0148-260-010 <sup>a</sup>                     | 97                     | 268.8                          |
| 0148-270-010 <sup>a</sup>                     |                        |                                |
| <b>East End</b>                               |                        |                                |
| 0027-251-330 <sup>a</sup>                     | 739                    | 76.1                           |
| 0027-270-060 <sup>a</sup>                     |                        |                                |
| 0027-510-150                                  | 480                    | 12.25                          |
| 0027-510-160                                  |                        |                                |
| 0027-510-120                                  | 437                    | 14.89                          |
| 0027-510-130                                  | 1198                   | 13.87                          |
| 0027-510-180 <sup>a</sup>                     | 401                    | 19.97                          |
| 0027-510-170 <sup>a</sup>                     |                        |                                |
| 0150-270-030 <sup>a</sup>                     |                        |                                |
| 0150-270-050                                  | 2                      | 7.85                           |
| <b>Total Acres in Williamson Act contract</b> | -                      | 455.96                         |

Source: BKF Engineering, 2007 and Solano County, 2007.

<sup>a</sup> These parcels are held under one Williamson Act contract.

Existing Conservation Easements

In addition to lands in Williamson Act contract, the Project area includes lands under conservation easement. Conservation easements typically are legal agreements between a landowner and a government agency or non-profit organization that permanently limits the development of land (with certain exceptions). Lands under conservation easement in the study area include lands designated for agricultural uses and lands designated for open space uses.

*Agricultural Easement*

Three parcels (two of which are also under Williamson Act contract) in the East End (APNs 0027-251-060, 0027-251-330, and 0027-251-400) are held in agricultural easement by the Solano Land Trust (SLT). These three parcels total 79.29 acres. The agricultural easement held by the SLT restricts the use of this property to agricultural uses in perpetuity.

*Open Space Easement*

In January 1992, the City granted to the Solano Land Trust (SLT) a conservation easement “on, upon, over, across and under” the Linear Park.<sup>7</sup> Resolution 92-30 from the Fairfield City Council granted this easement, which restricts use of the Linear Park in perpetuity to “park, recreation, and open space uses and other such uses as are consistent with them.” This easement includes the portion of the Linear Park that is located within the East End of the Project area (between Abernathy Road and Suisun Creek) and restricts the use of this property to open space uses in perpetuity.

<sup>7</sup> Grant of Conservation Easement with Covenants, January 27, 1992.

## **REGULATORY SETTING**

### State, Regional, and Local Plans

Land use and farmland planning in the study area is governed by the City and the County general plans. The relevant land use and farmland related objectives, policies, programs, and goals within the general plans are described as follows.

### **Solano County General Plan – Land Use Policies**

#### Land Use and Circulation Element

The Solano County General Plan Land Use and Circulation Element includes the following general goals that pertain to the Project:<sup>8</sup>

Goal 1 - Provide for orderly growth which assures a harmonious relationship of land uses both rural and urban and maintains the distinctive character of each community in Solano County.

Goal 2 - Maintain and enhance the environmental quality of Solano County as it relates to the use of land, water, and air by managing and preserving the diverse natural resources of the County for the use and enrichment of the lives of present and future generations.

Goal 6 - Provide and maintain a safe, economical, and efficient circulation and transportation system to ensure adequate multi-modal movement of people and goods within, to, and from, the County while incurring the least social, economic, and environmental harm to existing or planned activities and land uses.

#### Development Strategy

In Chapter II of the Land Use and Circulation Element is the Development Strategy. The Development Strategy includes the following goals and objectives relevant to the Project:

Objectives 1 - Preserve and protect the existing development pattern of distinct and identifiable cities and communities;

Objectives 2 - Encourage land use development patterns and circulation and transportation systems which minimize energy consumption; and

Objectives 3 - Encourage a development pattern which first seeks to maintain existing communities, second, to develop vacant lands within existing communities presently served by public services, and third, to develop lands immediately adjacent to existing communities where services can easily be provided.<sup>9</sup>

### **Solano County General Plan - Agricultural Land Use Policies**

#### Land Use Element

Chapter III of the Land Use Element includes the following agricultural and open space goal, objectives, and policies related to agricultural and open space pertaining to the Project.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Refer to page 12 of the Solano County General Plan Land Use and Circulation Element.

<sup>9</sup> Refer to page 19 of the Solano County General Plan.

<sup>10</sup> Refer to page 25 of the Solano County General Plan.

Objective] <sup>11</sup> – Preserve the County’s high quality soils and protect and maintain essential agricultural lands including areas which possess unique characteristics for the raising of specialty crops.<sup>12</sup>

- Policy 1 – Preserve and maintain essential agricultural lands including intensive agricultural areas comprised of high quality soils and irrigated lands and extensive agricultural areas with unique or significant dry land farming or grazing activities.
- Policy 2 - In essential agricultural areas, the County shall encourage the formation and retention of agricultural parcels of sufficient size to be maintained as a farmable unit. Farmable units are defined as the size of parcels a farmer would considering leasing or purchasing for different agricultural purposes as follows: 160-acre minimum parcel size for non-irrigated lands. 80-acre minimum parcel size for irrigated lands. 40-acre minimum parcel size where “highly productive” irrigated parcels are demonstrated to exist.
- Policy 12 – Lands within the “Agricultural” designations may be redesignated to “Park & Recreation” only for public recreation and public open space uses and only if the uses permitted by the new designations will not interfere with or be in conflict with agricultural operations.

The Land Use Element contains the following description of a “farmable unit.”<sup>13</sup>

“In areas designated for agricultural production where parcel sizes are smaller than the defined farmable unit, these parcels should not be allowed to break down further into smaller parcels for other uses such as rural residential home sites. Farmable units include smaller parcels [that] when combined with other parcels would be considered farmable.”

## **City of Fairfield General Plan - Land Use Policies**

### Land Use Element

Fairfield’s General Plan Land Use Element includes the following land use objectives, policies, and programs that pertain to the Project:

Objective LU 2 – Achieve a pattern of development that reinforces the City’s desired image.

- Policy LU 2.1 – Encourage the preservation of agricultural land surrounding the City and permanently preserve agriculture in the Suisun Valley.
  - Program LU 2.1A – In order to protect agriculture and the visual character of Suisun Valley, the City, in cooperation with the County, shall establish

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<sup>11</sup> Information in brackets has been added to allow for easier referencing. Actual Goals, Objectives, Policies and Programs are not numbered or lettered in General Plan.

<sup>12</sup> The General Plan defines *essential agricultural lands* as “those productive farmlands which have been identified by the local community as necessary to the maintenance of a healthy agricultural economy. No single criterion or rating system of factors is adequate to determine whether an area is essential. The selection process must be somewhat subjective including not only quantifiable factors, but the community’s perception of what it deems essential to its continued well being.” Refer to page 30 of the General Plan Land Use and Circulation Element for more detail.

<sup>13</sup> Refer to page 34 of the Solano County General Plan Land Use and Circulation Element.

an open space buffer along its perimeter. This buffer will serve to separate agriculture from development. Agriculture and recreational uses will be allowed within the buffer. This buffer shall incorporate existing landforms and features, such as the ridges east of Mankas Corner Road and Clayton Road, and groves of trees so as to take advantage of these features to visually screen development from the Valley. If existing features prove inadequate, the development shall use trees, berms, and other methods to minimize visibility from the Valley.

Objective LU 15 – Preserve identified prominent topographical features, including ridgelines, steep slopes and hillsides; and natural features such as tree stands and riparian areas.

Objective LU 16 – Development of identified hillside areas should be sensitive, to preserve natural features.

## **City of Fairfield - Farmland Policies**

### *Agriculture Element*

The City's General Plan Agriculture Element states, "One of the underlying goals of the General Plan is to maintain and enhance the City's desired image through a well balanced pattern of development. The agricultural lands in the Suisun Valley and the grazing lands to the north and south of Fairfield play a prominent role in defining the visual character of the City." The City has adopted a number of policies and programs intended to protect the agricultural lands around Fairfield from development pressures.

The City's General Plan Agriculture Element contains goals, objectives, policies, and programs which are relevant to the Project as follows:

Goals [Goal A] – Preserve agricultural and grazing lands within the General Plan area which define the visual setting of Fairfield; and, recognize the economic importance of agriculture in Solano County by directing the City's growth away from important farmlands and prime agricultural soils.

Objective AG 1 – Support preservation of existing agricultural lands.

- Policy AG 1.4 – Permanently preserve productive agricultural lands within the Suisun Valley by continuing to direct new urban development away from the Suisun Valley.
  - Program 1.4A – Where land is identified as Prime Farmland, Farmland of Statewide Importance, or Unique Farmland on the most recent Important Farmland maps prepared by the California Department of Conservation is proposed for conversion to urban uses, the City shall arrange for preservation of an equal amount of the same class of farmland within the area. Such arrangement may be through fee purchase, purchase of conservation easements, payment of an in-lieu fee, or other mechanism.

Objective AG 2 – Encourage the preservation and expansion of the local agricultural economy.

- Policy AG 2.1 – Cooperatively work with farmers, property owners, universities, colleges, and agricultural organizations and agencies to enhance the viability of agricultural uses and activities.
- Policy AG 2.3 – Development shall not encroach upon or consume productive cropland in areas such as the Suisun Valley.

### **Solano Multi-species Habitat Conservation Plan**

The Solano Multi-species Habitat Conservation Plan/Natural Community Conservation Plan (HCP/NCCP) is being developed by the Solano County Water Agency (SCWA) to support the issuance of a Section 10(a)1(B) “incidental take permit” under the federal Endangered Species Act (ESA) as part of a Biological Opinion between the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and Bureau of Reclamation issued in 1999. A total of 71 species are currently proposed to be covered under the HCP. According to the draft version of the HCP, the West End of the Project site falls within Zone 1, which represents the Urban Zone. The East End falls within Zone 2, which represents areas affected by SCWA, Irrigation Districts, and Reclamation District Boundaries. However, the HCP is in draft form only and as such does not apply to the Project. The HCP would apply if and when it is adopted by the SCWA. Publication of the HCP is anticipated for late 2008.<sup>14</sup> Notwithstanding the HCP, the Project is still subject to other state and federal regulations.<sup>15</sup>

### **LAND USE AND AGRICULTURAL RESOURCES IMPACTS ANALYSIS**

#### Significance Criteria

#### **California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA)**

Appendix G of the CEQA Guidelines identifies environmental issues to be considered when determining whether the Project could have a significant effect on the environment. STA has applied these standards of significance for evaluating impacts of the North Connector Project.

#### Land Uses

The Project would have a significant impact to land uses if it would:

- Physically divide an established community.
- Conflict with an applicable land use plan, policy, or regulation of an agency with jurisdiction over the Project (including but not limited to the general plan, specific plan, local coastal program, or zoning ordinance) adopted for the purpose of avoiding or mitigating an environmental effect (i.e., City of Fairfield and Solano County General Plan, Zoning Regulations and Ordinances and Solano County LAFCO).
- Conflict with any applicable habitat conservation plan (or natural community conservation plan).

<sup>14</sup> Lee, Chris, Senior Environmental Planner, Solano County Water Agency, personal communication, May 31<sup>st</sup>, 2007. The Final Administrative Draft of the Solano Multi-Species HCP is available online at <http://www.scwa2.com/hcp.html>.

<sup>15</sup> Regulations include compliance with NEPA, CEQA, Porter-Cologne Act, and any regulations set forth by the Fish and Game and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

In addition, STA has determined that the Project would have a significant impact if it would:

- Conflict with an existing open space conservation easement.

### Agricultural Resources

The Project would have a significant impact to agricultural resources if it would:

- Convert Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance (Farmland), as shown on the maps prepared pursuant to the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program of the California Resources Agency, to non-agricultural use.
- Conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use.
- Involve other changes in the existing environment, which due to their location or nature, could result in conversion of farmland to non-agricultural use.

In addition, STA has determined that the Project would have a significant impact if it would:

- Conflict with an existing agricultural conservation easement.

Furthermore, based on the Project's proximity to commercial, semi-rural, and agricultural land uses, the Project would have a significant impact if it would:

- Result in decay and/or deterioration of agricultural areas.

### **Issues Not Discussed Further**

#### Conflict with habitat conservation plan or natural community conservation plan.

As previously discussed, the Solano HCP is being developed by the SCWA. The Project alignment falls within Zone 1 and Zone 2 of the draft HCP plan area. However, this HCP is in draft form only, and has not been adopted as of January 2008, and therefore, does not apply to the Project. No other known HCPs or NCCPs exist in the Project area.<sup>16</sup> Therefore, the Project would not conflict with any applicable HCP/NCCPs. Discussion of potential impacts to endangered species is included in Section 4.3 Biological Resources.

#### Conflict with an existing open space conservation easement.

Construction of the East End would include a new multi-use path along the north side of the new roadway. The multi-use path would connect to the existing Linear Park at both Abernathy Road and Suisun Creek. Because the Project includes construction of a new multi-use path between Abernathy Road and Suisun Creek, the City has initiated a General Plan Amendment to revise Policy OS12.7 to remove the existing Linear Park between Abernathy Road and Suisun Creek, as well as remove this portion of the Linear Park from the General Plan Land Use Diagram and show the North Connector Project as a Public Facility located within the County's jurisdiction. The Project would include removal of the paved trail within the Linear Park between Abernathy Road and Suisun Creek, however, the existing bridge across Suisun Creek would remain and public access would still be allowed. The open space conservation easement located of the portion of the Linear Park would stay

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<sup>16</sup> Lee, Chris, Senior Environmental Planner, SCWA, personal communication, May 31, 2007.

in place. Therefore, there are no impacts related to conflict with an existing open space conservation easement.

## ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS AND MITIGATION MEASURES

### Less than Significant Impacts

#### Physically divide an established community.

An established community is defined as a community in which residents have a sense of belonging to their neighborhood or experience attachment to community groups and institutions as a result of continued association over time. Because the immediate Project area consists primarily of agricultural land uses with some scattered residences and businesses, it is not considered an established community. Notwithstanding, the Project would have direct and indirect impacts to land uses in the Project area. Direct land use impacts are tied to the actual footprint of the proposed alignment and construction areas. Indirect land use impacts would include the potential for the new roadway to induce growth in the Project area. Impacts as a result of the Project would involve Real Property transactions. Figure 4.1-3 illustrates the direct and indirect land use and agricultural impacts to parcels in the East End and Table 4.1-2 and 4.1-3 provide information on encroachment and displacement in the West and East ends.

#### West End

Construction of the West End would directly affect five parcels. Land use designations in this area according to the Solano County General Plan Land Use Map include *Low Density* residential between Business Center Drive and SR12 West and *Extensive Agriculture* on a portion of land within the Project area north of SR12 and all lands to the south of SR12. The lands between Business Center Drive and SR12 are predominately used for livestock grazing while areas south of SR12 along Red Top Road consist of rural residential and industrial uses.

For the portion of the new roadway between Business Center Drive and State Route 12 West there are two design options being considered with regard to cut and fill slopes; construction of 2:1 slopes would result in a direct impact to 11.3 acres and 4:1 slopes would result in a direct impact to 17.7 acres. In addition, construction of the SR12 West/Red Top Road intersection would result in the direct impact of an additional 2.3 acres of land. The total direct impact to acreage in the West End ranges between 13.6 and 20.1 acres. This acreage would be acquired by STA, the lead agency, from the private property owners. Acquisition of these parcels would be governed by the Uniform Relocation Assistance and Property Acquisitions Policies Act of 1970, as amended (49 CFR 24). Under this Act, displaced individuals and businesses must receive fair and humane treatment and shall not suffer unnecessarily as a result of Project designed for the benefit of the public. Property owners must be compensated at fair market value for the land and structure. Any affected property owners would be entitled to full-market land and structure value as a result of the proposed take. Construction of the West End would not result in the need to acquire any whole parcels or demolition of structures. The West End consists of rural lands, and there would be no demolition of structures or displacement of residences or businesses.

Construction of the Project would affect existing access on two properties north of SR12 West: APN 0148-260-016 and APNs 0148-270-020 and 0148-270-020-040 (two parcels with the same owner). APN 0148-260-016 currently has direct access to SR12 near the existing intersection with Red Top Road. This access point would be affected by construction of the new North Connector/SR12 West/Red Top Road intersection and would be relocated to connect with the Project alignment just north of SR12 West. In addition, an existing farm road on this property that provides access to an existing barn would be affected by construction of the new roadway. To maintain this farm access, the Project has been designed to include an underpass for this farm road.

APNs 0148-270-020 and 0148-270-020-040 are currently accessed via a driveway connecting to Mangels Boulevard. This driveway also serves as farm access across the property and would be affected by the new roadway. The Project includes replacing access to this property with a new driveway connecting to the North Connector road near its connection with existing Business Center Drive. In addition, the Project would include an underpass on APNs 0148-270-020 and 0148-270-020-040 to allow movement of farm equipment and livestock on the property. Replacement access would be provided as part of the Project and existing agricultural uses would be able to continue on these properties. Therefore, impacts related to the physical division of an established community on the West End of the Project, are considered less than significant.

**Table 4.1-2. West End Parcel Encroachment and Displacement Totals<sup>1</sup>**

| Number of Parcels or Portions of Land Affected | Number of Full Property Acquisitions | Total Acres Affected <sup>2</sup> |           | Number of Demolitions      |
|--|--------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------|----------------------------|
|  |                                      | 2:1 Slope                         | 4:1 Slope |                            |
| All construction scenarios                     | All construction scenarios           | 2:1 Slope                         | 4:1 Slope | All construction scenarios |
| 5  | 0                                    | 13.6                              | 20.1      | 0                          |

Source: BKF Engineering, 2007.

<sup>1</sup> Only structures of monetary value and included in County of Solano assessment roles, were considered displaced.

<sup>2</sup> Does not include ROW acquisition for detention basins in the West End.

### East End

Construction of the East End would directly affect 18 parcels totaling approximately 29.56 acres and demolish one or more businesses (consisting of two large buildings and various outbuildings) located at the south end of Russell Road. The process by which privately owned parcels would be acquired (including parcels acquired in the West End) would be governed by the Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisitions Policies Act of 1970, as amended (49 CFR 24). Under this Act, displaced individuals and businesses must receive fair and humane treatment and shall not suffer unnecessarily as a result of Project designed for the benefit of the public. Property owners must be compensated at fair market value for the land and structure. Any affected property owners would be entitled to full-market land and structure value as a result of the proposed take. Although construction of the East End would result in the displacement of one or more businesses, because of the rural and agricultural nature of the land uses in the Project area, the area is not considered an established community. Therefore, impacts related to the physical division of an established community on the East End of the Project, are considered less than significant.

**Table 4.1-3. East End Parcel Encroachment and Displacement Totals<sup>1</sup>**

| <b>Number of Parcels or Portions of Land Affected</b> | <b>Number of Full Property Acquisitions</b> | <b>Total Acres</b> | <b>Number of Demolitions</b> |
|---|---|--------------------|------------------------------|
| 18  | 1   | 29.56              | 1 or more businesses         |

Source: BKF Engineering, 2007.

<sup>1</sup> Only structures of monetary value and included in County of Solano assessment roles, were considered displaced.

*Conflict with an applicable land use plan, policy, or regulation of an agency with jurisdiction over the Project.*

Solano County General Plan

*Land Use and Circulation Element (Goals 1, 2 and 6)*

The Project is consistent with the Solano County General Plan's Land Use Goal 1, in that it provides a new transportation route with minimal disruption of existing communities within Solano County.

The Project alignment, to the extent feasible, has been located in areas where the least amount of natural resources would be affected, supporting Land Use Goal 2. The East End has been located as close to I-80 as possible to limit impacts to agricultural resources and includes a "clear span" bridge across Suisun Creek to reduce impacts to the creek. In the West End the roadway alignment has been designed to minimize impacts to sensitive wildlife habitats while maintaining necessary design standards and safety requirements. Where impacts would occur to natural resources, mitigation measures have been included to reduce and/or replace the impacted resources (see Chapter 4.5 Biological Resources).

The Project would also be consistent with Land Use Goal 6, which seeks to "provide and maintain a safe, economical and efficient circulation and transportation system to ensure adequate multi-modal movement of people and goods within, to and from, the County while incurring the least social, economic and environmental harm to existing or planned activities and land uses." The Project would decrease the travel time on I-80 (when compared to the No Project scenario) by allowing local trips to take place on the new road, instead of the freeway, and providing a new, efficient route for transit services between the Suisun Valley/Green Valley area to and from downtown Fairfield.

*Development Strategy (Objectives 1, 2 and 3)*

The Development Strategies listed in the Solano County General Plan are similar to Land Use Goals 1, 3 and 6 and the Project is considered consistent with the Development Strategies for many of the same reasons as stated above. The Project would have minimal disruption of existing communities and would provide an improved circulation pattern that would minimize energy consumption by reducing congestion on I-80 and providing an alternative (and more efficient) route for local traffic and transit usage.

*Agricultural Land Use Policies (Policies 1, 2 and 12)*

In regards to Policy 1, the Project has been designed to reduce to the extent feasible, impacts to essential agricultural lands by locating the roadway as close as possible to I-80 in the East End. In the West End the roadway has been designed to include access under the new roadway so that existing grazing activities can continue.

In regard to Policy 2 and the description of "farmable unit", existing parcels bisected by the new roadway would not be considered subdivided pursuant to the Subdivision Map Act as a result of the Project. Remnant lands, resulting from construction of the roadway, would remain legally part of the original parcel and must be treated as such with regard to issuance of permits and other entitlements within Solano County.

Solano County has initiated a General Plan Amendment (GPA) designed to clarify that Policy 2 of Chapter III Land Use and Circulation Element, Agriculture and Open Space Land Use of the County General Plan is intended to impose limitations on the subdivision process rather than prevent public agencies from acquiring portions of small parcels for public purposes. The text of the General Plan should be amended as follows:<sup>17</sup>

"In areas designated for agricultural production where parcel sizes are smaller than the definable farmable unit, these parcels should not be allowed to be subdivided into smaller parcels for other uses such as residential home sites. Farmable units include smaller parcels which when combined with other parcels would be considered farmable." (Chapter III Agricultural and Open Space Element, Preservation of Essential Agricultural Lands, Farmable Unit, Page 34, Paragraph 3)

In regards to Policy 12, the new multi-use path to be constructed in the East End would be a public recreation facility that would be compatible with surrounding agricultural operations because it would replace the existing Linear Park that has been located in this area for many years.

City of Fairfield General Plan

*Land Use Element (Objective LU2, Policy LU 2.1, Objectives LU 15 and 16)*

In regard to Objective LU 2 and Policy LU 2.1, the Project is considered consistent because the roadway would be located as close as possible to I-80 in the East End, thereby preserving as much agricultural lands as possible. The roadway has also been designed to replace access to allow continued farming in both the West and East Ends. The Project also includes a multi-use path which would also be consistent with this objective and policy.

In regards to Objectives 15 and 16, the Project has been designed to the extent feasible to reduce impacts to topography (in the West End) and biologically sensitive areas (on both the West and East Ends). Contour grading and replacement landscaping are proposed to reduce impacts to hillsides in the West End. Riparian impacts in both the West and East End would be mitigated through replacement plantings. In addition, mitigation has been included to reduce impacts to other biological resource in the project area (see Chapter 4.5)

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<sup>17</sup> Walsh, Matthew. Principal Planner, Solano County. Personal Communication. December 18, 2007.

*Agricultural Element (Goal A, Objectives AG1 and AG 2)*

The Project would directly and indirectly affect existing agricultural lands, which would be inconsistent with Goal A and Objective AG 1. However the roadway would be located as close as possible to I-80 in the East End, thereby preserving as much agricultural lands as possible. The roadway has also been designed to replace access to allow continued farming in both the West and East Ends. In addition, mitigation that would ensure permanent preservation of prime agricultural land at a 1:1 ratio, which would have a beneficial impact on preservation of agricultural land in Solano County, has been included (see Mitigation Measures 4.1-1 and 4.1-2).

In regards to Objective AG 2, as stated above, the roadway would be located as close as possible to I-80 to preserve as much agricultural land as possible in the Suisun Valley area. The roadway would also include replacement access to allow continued farming in both the West and East Ends.

For the reasons stated above, the Project is considered consistent with the Goals and Objectives of the City of Fairfield General Plan, Agricultural Element.

*Convert Farmland to non-agricultural use (West End only).*

The Project would convert land used for grazing in the West End to non-agricultural use. These lands are located within Solano County, are designated as Non-Prime farmlands, and the land use designation of much of these lands is for low density residential development. The alignment would directly impact 11.3 acres if 2:1 slopes are used and 17.7 acres if 4:1 slopes are used. Construction of the North Connector/SR12 West/Red Top Road intersection would affect an additional 2.3 acres of land. Thus, between 13.6 and 20.1 acres of land used for grazing would be directly impacted. There are approximately 154,523 acres of grazing land in unincorporated Solano County. The Project's impact in the West End would constitute approximately 0.0073 percent of this land if 2:1 slopes are used and approximately 0.012 percent if 4:1 slopes are used. Thus, the amount of land that would be impacted is extremely small in comparison to the total amount of grazing land within the County. Additionally, none of the land is designated Prime Farmland and much of the land is designated for low density residential development, which further reduces the agricultural potential of the property. Therefore, impacts of the Project on farmlands in the West End are considered less than significant.

*Conversion of lands held in Williamson Act contract to non-agricultural use.*

The Project includes parcels on the West End and East End that are under Williamson Act contract. Government Code § 51292 states "No public agency or person shall locate a public improvement within an agricultural preserve unless the following findings are made: (a) the location is not based primarily on a consideration of the lower cost of acquiring land in an agricultural preserve. (b) If the land is agricultural land covered under contract pursuant to this chapter for any public improvement, that there is no other land within or outside the preserve on which it is reasonably feasible to locate the public improvement." However, Government Code § 51293 indicates that § 51292 shall not apply to "(a) the location of construction of improvements where the board or council administering the agricultural preserve approves or agrees to the location thereof, except when the acquiring

agency and administering agency are the same entity.” Thus, the portion of land under Williamson Act contract would “be null and void for all land actually taken or acquired.”<sup>18</sup>

Altogether there are eight Williamson Act contracts that would be directly impacted by the Project (see Table 4.1-4). The portion of land within each contract that would be needed for roadway construction and operation would be removed from the Williamson Act contract. The Williamson Act contract on the remainder of the lands within the contract would remain unaffected.

Termination of a Williamson Act contract (or portion thereof) is not considered a physical environmental impact, rather it is a change in the tax benefit status of that portion of land and does not constitute a physical impact under CEQA.

Lands under Williamson Act contracts in the East End of the project area are designated as Prime Farmlands. Conversion of Prime Farmlands to roadway uses is considered a physical impact on the environment and discussed below.

**Table 4.1-4. Affect on Williamson Act Contracts within the Project Area**

| Assessor Parcel Number # | Contract Number | Total Acres in Contract | Acres to be Removed from Contract |
|--------------------------|-----------------|-------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| <b>West End</b>          |                 |                         |                                   |
| 0148-270-340             | 1100            | 42.23                   | 5.3 <sup>a</sup>                  |
| 0148-260-010             | 97              | 268.8                   | 9.3 <sup>a</sup>                  |
| 0148-270-010             |                 |                         | 0.2 <sup>a</sup>                  |
| <b>East End</b>          |                 |                         |                                   |
| 0027-251-330             | 739             | 76.1                    | 9.93                              |
| 0027-270-060             |                 |                         |                                   |
| 0027-510-150             | 480             | 12.25                   | 0.23                              |
| 0027-510-160             |                 |                         |                                   |
| 0027-510-120             | 437             | 14.89                   | 1.75                              |
| 0027-510-130             | 1198            | 13.87                   | 1.93                              |
| 0027-510-180             | 401             | 19.97                   | 1.27                              |
| 0027-510-170             |                 |                         |                                   |
| 0150-270-030             | 2               | 7.85                    | 0.19                              |
| 0150-270-050             |                 |                         |                                   |
| <b>Totals</b>            | -               | 455.96                  |                                   |

Source: BKF Engineering, 2007 and Solano County, 2007.

<sup>18</sup> Detailed information on the cancellation requirements for Williamson Act contracts is available on the California Department of Conservation website.  
[http://www.consrv.ca.gov/DLRP/lca/FAQ/contract\\_cancellations.htm](http://www.consrv.ca.gov/DLRP/lca/FAQ/contract_cancellations.htm)

Changes in the existing environment, which due to their location or nature, could result in the conversion of farmland to non-agricultural use.

In many cases, construction of a new roadway through an undeveloped area could be expected to spur the conversion of agricultural land to non-agricultural uses. This is not anticipated for the Project. (See also, Growth Inducing Impacts Analysis, Section 6.0, CEQA Required Consulsions.)

West End

In the West End, existing access to agricultural parcels is limited. The Project has been designed to only replace access to agricultural parcels where access presently exists.

East End

Similar to the West End, the East End has been designed to only replace access to agricultural parcels where access presently exists or where needed to maintain access for continued farming. Replacement access and access to maintain farming have been accounted for in the design of the East End and would occur within the footprint of the proposed right-of-way. Impacts associated with this access are included in the amount of agricultural land that would be taken by the Project (see Table 4.1-5).

Because the Project has been designed to only provide replacement access to parcels where access currently exists, or provide access for continued farming; and existing agricultural protection policies in the City and County general plan limit the potential for conversion of agricultural lands, impacts related to conversion of farmland to non-agricultural use as a result of increasing accessibility to farmlands, would be less than significant.

Result in decay and/or deterioration of agricultural areas.

In general, urban decay is defined as the extended vacancy, deferred maintenance, and abandonment of property in an area (usually related to a downtown or commercial/retail center). Other forms of decay can exist as well. The impetus of decay is usually attributable to individual property owner's financial decline, and overall declining economic conditions in an area.

The majority of land uses in the vicinity of the Project area are currently zoned for agricultural uses. There is no evidence that the Project will contribute to the extended vacancy, deferred maintenance, or abandonment of area agricultural properties. The Project area includes lands currently used for livestock grazing, lands designated as Prime Farmland, lands that are held in Williamson Act contract, and lands that are under conservation easement. Land use impacts and mitigations related to the potential for division of an established community (business relocations) and conversion of agricultural uses is discussed above (under Less than Significant Impacts). The Project does not include the construction of commercial or retail development, and is not in the immediate vicinity of a commercial or residential area. Furthermore, the Project would not provide access to commercial or residential areas that does not already exist. Therefore, the Project's contribution to urban or agricultural decay and deterioration, is considered less than significant.

## Significant and Potentially Significant Impacts and Mitigation Measures

### **4.1-1: The Project would convert Prime Farmland to non-agricultural uses (East End only). This is considered a significant adverse impact.**

Table 4.1-5 documents the impacts to Prime Farmland resulting from construction and operation of the Project including replacement access and access necessary to maintain farming. The Project would directly convert 19.44 acres of Prime Farmland in the East End to new roadway, multi-use path and associated right of way. This area would no longer be available for agricultural production. In addition to this direct conversion of Prime Farmlands, the new roadway could have indirect impacts to an additional 10.33 acres of Prime Farmland through the creation of non-farmable portions of existing parcels, the continued agricultural use of which could be negatively affected by their limited size and increased proximity to the new roadway. The total acreage (direct and indirect) of Prime Farmland affected by the Project in the East End is 29.77 acres. The breakdown of direct and indirect impacts to Prime Farmland by parcel is shown in Table 4.1-5. The direct and indirect loss of Prime Farmland is considered to be a significant adverse impact.

**Mitigation Measure 4.1-1:** Prior to construction of the East End of the North Connector Project, the STA shall acquire conservation easement(s) for 1.0 acres of Prime Farmland within the County for every acre of land considered impacted within the Project site that is designated as Prime Farmland. These easements would be held in trust by a public agency or other appropriate entity and be located within the limits of Solano County. Implementation of this measure would ensure permanent preservation of prime agricultural land at a 1:1 ratio, and would have a beneficial impact on the preservation of agricultural lands in Solano County. Table 4.1-5 provides a summary of the mitigation requirements for impacts to Prime Farmlands. Implementation of this measure would reduce impacts to lands designated as Prime Farmland to a less-than-significant level.

**Significance After Mitigation:** Less than significant.

### **4.1-2: The Project would convert lands subject to agricultural conservation easements to non-agricultural uses. This is considered a significant adverse impact.**

Three parcels in the East End are held in conservation easement (see Table 4.1-5) by the SLT. The Project would directly convert 9.97 acres of land within the conservation easement to roadway, multi-use path and associated right of way. This area would no longer be available for agricultural production. No indirect impact to lands within the conservation easement is anticipated because the remaining lands are of sufficient size to support continued agricultural production – 26.06 acres south of the new roadway and 40.24 acres north of the new roadway.

As previously discussed, lands held in conservation easement are intended to stay in agricultural uses in perpetuity. The lands under conservation easement in the East End are considered of higher agricultural value because they are both classified as Prime Farmland and the conservation easement preserves agricultural use in perpetuity. Similar to Prime Farmlands, the direct conversion of lands held in agricultural conservation easement to non-agricultural use is considered a significant adverse impact.

**Mitigation Measure 4.1-2:** Prior to construction of the East End of the North Connector Project, the STA shall acquire conservation easement(s) for 1.25 acres of Prime Farmland within the County for every acre of land considered impacted within the Project site that is under conservation easement. These easements would be held in trust by a public agency or other appropriate entity and be located within the limits of Solano County. Because conservation easements provide permanent preservation of agricultural land, implementation of this measure would ensure permanent preservation of prime agricultural land at a 1.25:1 acre ratio, and would have a beneficial impact on the preservation of agricultural lands in Solano County. Table 4.1-5 provides a summary of the mitigation requirements for impacts to lands held under conservation easements. Implementation of this measure would reduce impacts to lands held in conservation easement to a less-than-significant level.

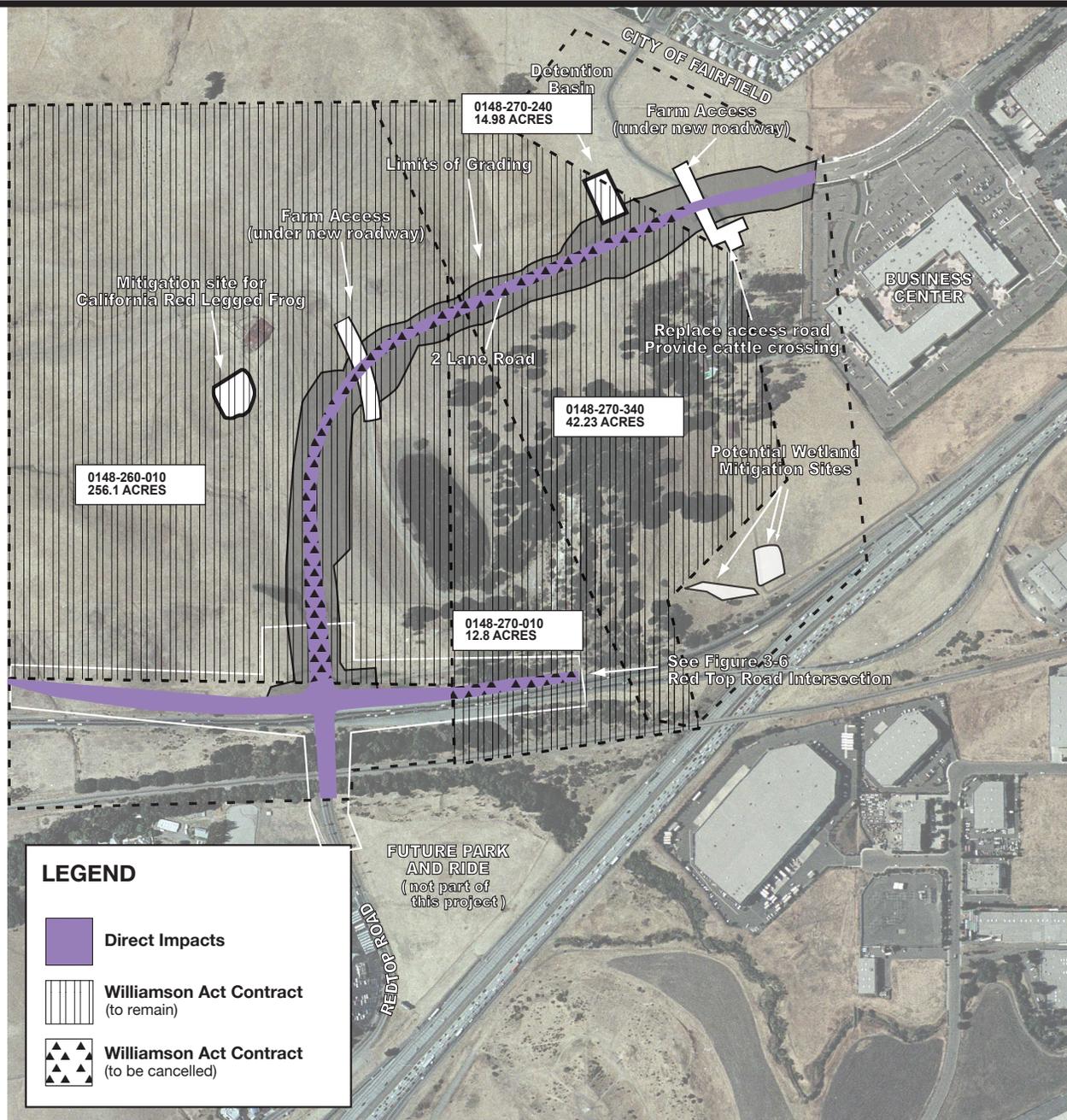
**Significance After Mitigation:** Less than significant.

**Table 4.1-5. Impacts to Prime Farmlands and Agricultural Conservation Easements in the East End**

| APN#                              | Direct or Indirect Impacts |                 |   |                 |
|-----------------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------|---|-----------------|
|                                   | Acreage in Prime Farmland  |                 | Acreage in Conservation Easement <sup>1</sup> |                 |
|                                   | Direct Impact              | Indirect Impact | Direct Impact                                 | Indirect Impact |
| 0027-271-060                      |                            |                 | 2.74  | 0               |
| 0027-251-330                      |                            |                 | 7.19  | 0               |
| 0027-251-260                      |                            |                 | 0.04  | 0               |
| 0027-251-370                      | 7.22                       | 4.01            |   |                 |
| 0027-251-310a                     | 2.26                       | 0.39            |   |                 |
| 0027-510-030                      | 0.81                       | 0.75            |   |                 |
| 0027-510-040                      |                            |                 |   |                 |
| 0027-510-070                      | 2.29                       | 0               |   |                 |
| 0027-510-080                      | 1.49                       | 0.76            |   |                 |
| 0027-510-150                      | 0.23                       | 0               |   |                 |
| 0027-510-120                      | 1.75                       | 1.18            |   |                 |
| 0027-510-130                      | 1.93                       | 3.24            |   |                 |
| 0027-510-180                      | 0.91                       | 0               |   |                 |
| 0027-270-030                      | 0.36                       | 0               |   |                 |
| 0027-270-050                      | 0.19                       | 0               |   |                 |
| Acre Subtotal                     | 19.44                      | 10.33           | 9.97  | 0               |
| Acreage Type Subtotal             | 29.77                      |                 | 9.97  |                 |
| Mitigation Calculation            | 29.77*1.0 = 29.77          |                 | 9.97*1.25 = 12.46                             |                 |
| Total Mitigation Acreage Required | <b>29.77+12.46 = 42.33</b> |                 |   |                 |

Source: BKF Engineering and CirclePoint, 2007.

<sup>1</sup> All of the lands held in conservation easement are also designated Prime Farmland.



**LEGEND**

-  Direct Impacts
-  Williamson Act Contract (to remain)
-  Williamson Act Contract (to be cancelled)

Figure 4.1-1. Williamson Act contracts (West End)



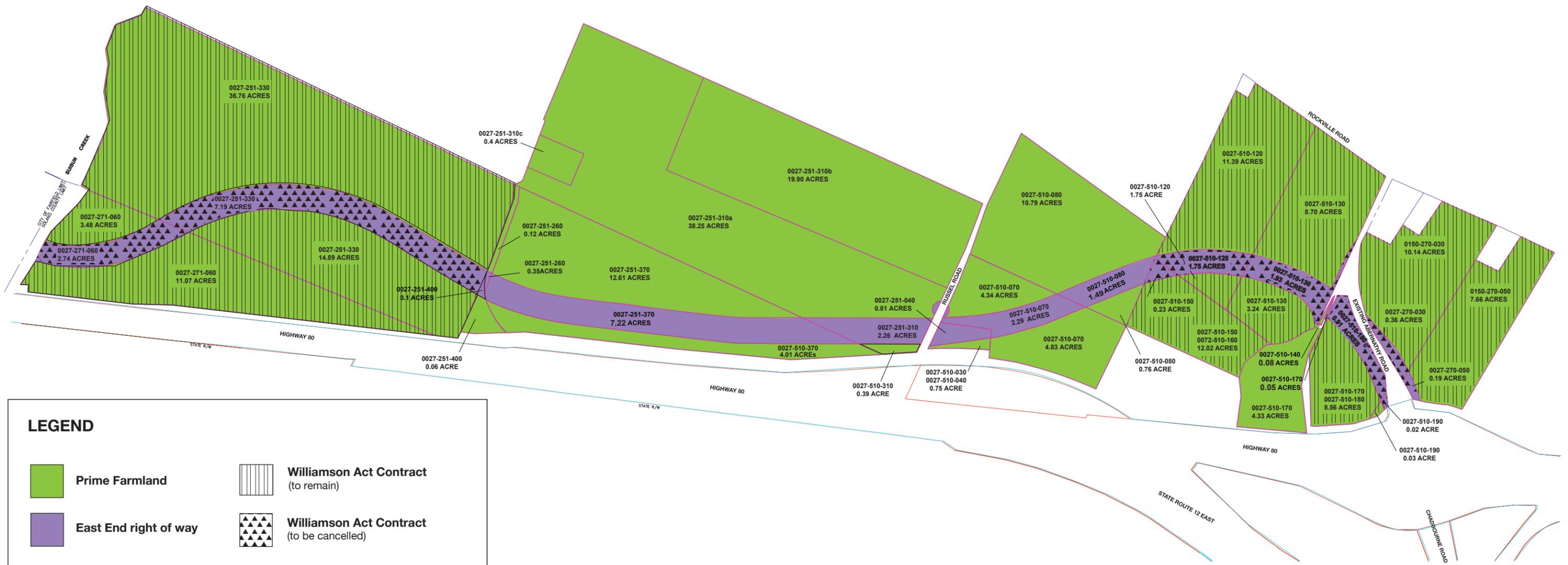
Map not to scale

**NORTH**  
Connecto**R**

**STRA**  
Solano Transportation Authority

Source: Solano Transportation Authority





**LEGEND**

|   |                              |   |  |
|---|------------------------------|---|--|
|  | <b>Prime Farmland</b>        |  | <b>Williamson Act Contract (to remain)</b>       |
|  | <b>East End right of way</b> |  | <b>Williamson Act Contract (to be cancelled)</b> |



NOT TO SCALE

NOTE: Parcel 0027-251-330 and 0027-270-060 are held in Williamson Act Contract and Conservation Easement. Parcel 0027-251-400 is held in Conservation Easement only.

Figure 4.1-2. Williamson Act contracts (East End)





**LEGEND**

- Prime Farmland
- Direct Impacts
- Conservation Easement (to remain)
- Indirect Impacts
- Conservation Easement (to be removed)



NOT TO SCALE

NOTE: Parcel 0027-251-330 and 0027-270-060 are held in Williamson Act Contract and Conservation Easement. Parcel 0027-251-400 is held in Conservation Easement only.

Figure 4.1-3. Prime Farmland and Conservation Easements (East End)

