



## Staff Report

**TO:** City Council

**FROM:** Carole Kendrick, Planning Manager

**DATE:** August 17, 2021

**SUBJECT:** **Hold a Public Hearing Regarding California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration Review for the Pennsylvania Avenue Widening Project between First Street and Sixth Street**

### Background and Analysis:

The City of Beaumont has determined that the proposed Pennsylvania Avenue Widening Project (Project), and the required discretionary actions of the City Council for the Project, require compliance with the guidelines and regulations of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). This Initial Study and Mitigated Negative Declaration (IS/MND) addresses the direct, indirect, and cumulative environmental effects associated with the proposed Project.

This IS/MND has been prepared in conformance with the California Environmental Quality Act of 1970, as amended (Public Resources Code Section 21000 *et seq.*); Section 15070 of the State Guidelines for Implementation of the California Environmental Quality Act of 1970 ("CEQA Guidelines"), as amended (CCR, Title 14, Chapter 3, Section 15000 *et seq.*); and applicable requirements of the Lead Agency, the City of Beaumont.

This IS/MND has determined that the proposed Project would result in potentially significant environmental impacts; however, mitigation measures are proposed that would reduce any potentially significant impact to less than significant levels. As such, an IS/MND is deemed to be the appropriate document to provide the necessary environmental review and clearance.

### Project

The Pennsylvania Avenue Widening Project (Project) proposes to widen and add two additional lanes to Pennsylvania Avenue between First Street and Sixth Street, a

distance of approximately 2,800 feet, in the City of Beaumont. The proposed widening and associated improvements would be predominantly within existing right-of-way except for areas requiring easements for stormwater infrastructure improvements and temporary construction easements (TCEs) needed for property frontage improvements and minor utility relocations.

The additional lanes within these limits would result in a four-lane major highway as specified for this roadway segment by the City of Beaumont General Plan Mobility Element. The widening would require improvements to the existing Union Pacific Railroad (UPRR) at-grade crossing and freeway ramp terminals at the I-10 Freeway within Caltrans right-of-way. Pedestrian access with a new sidewalk would be provided for the length of the Project on the west side and impacted intersections would be brought up to current Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) standards with new and/or updated curb ramps.

Work activities include the following: excavation for underground electrical work, storm drain conduit/inlets, utility cover adjustments, relocation of existing power poles, grading and re-grading the existing slopes, roadway excavation of approximately 4,700 cubic yards, the application of approximately 4,750 tons of asphalt paving to new road bed, removal/restriping of lanes, and removal/replacement and addition of roadway signage. Excavation would be within four feet of the existing surface grade with several deeper excavations (up to 20 feet below existing surface grade) for the power pole relocations. Staging of all equipment and materials would occur within the Project limits on the City's right-of-way and within the TCEs on adjacent properties.

Construction of the Project would occur in three phases. Storm drain and utility relocations would occur prior to any major roadway improvements to reduce traffic impacts. The first phase would involve construction of the outer improvements for the widening to the north and south of the UPRR tracks with an estimated duration of four months. The second phase would involve the closure of the at-grade crossing to construct the improvements within UPRR right-of-way with an estimated duration of one month. The last phase would complete the remaining portion of construction within the center of the roadway north of the tracks and final paving with an estimated duration of three months.

### **Environmental Documentation**

An Environmental Analysis of this proposal was prepared by Moffatt & Nichol to assess the potential impacts that this project would have and mitigation measures which are required to mitigate identified impacts to a level of insignificance, in accordance with the

California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). The areas that were covered within the analysis were:

aesthetics, agriculture and forestry resources, air quality, biological resources, energy, greenhouse gas emissions, land use/planning, population/housing, transportation/traffic, agriculture/forestry resources, cultural resources, tribal cultural resources, hazards/hazardous materials, hydrology and water quality, mineral resources, public services, utilities/service systems, geology/soils, noise, and recreation.

In general, the findings made in these areas found that the impacts would be either “less-than-significant” or “not an impact” to that particular area of study. Air quality is expected to improve because this extension will help alleviate traffic queuing at local railroad and freeway intersections.

### **Biological Resources**

A biological resources assessment jurisdictional delineation and multiple species habitat conservation plan (MSHCP) consistency analysis were prepared by Jericho Systems, Inc. in conjunction with this review and mitigation measures are proposed to be incorporated into the project to reduce impacts to a level of insignificance. The proposed mitigation measures include a pre-construction burrowing owl survey, that grading work shall done outside the nesting periods for sensitive species of birds, and the requirement for a determination of a biologically equivalent or superior preservation (DBESP) be obtained in the even that impacts to riparian/riverine habitat cannot be avoided. The mitigation is shown as AM BIO-1, MM BIO-2 and AM BIO-3 on Pages 33 and 34 of Attachment A.

### **Cultural Resources**

A cultural report was prepared by CRM Tech in conjunction with this review and a mitigation measure is proposed to verify contact information for on-call archeological monitoring and note on building plans that all earthwork will cease within a 50-foot area of a discovered cultural resource, as shown as MM CUL-1 on Page 39 of Attachment A.

### **Geology and Soils**

A paleontological resources assessment report was prepared by CRM Tech in conjunction with this review and a mitigation measure is proposed to implement a paleontological resource impact mitigation consistent with CEQA and the society of vertebrate paleontology guidelines, as shown as MM GEO-1 on Page 47 of Attachment A.

### **Hazards and Hazardous Materials**

An initial site assessment (phase I) was prepared by Leighton Group in conjunction with this review and mitigation measures are proposed to address potential noise impacts and are shown as MM HAZ-1 and MM HAZ-2 on Pages 55 and 56 of Attachment A.

**Noise**

A noise study report was prepared by Entech Consulting Group in conjunction with this review and mitigation measures are proposed to address soils management and the testing of yellow striping and are shown as MM NOI-1 through MM NOI-5 on Pages 74 and 75 of Attachment A.

The draft initial study/mitigated negative declaration was circulated for a 30-day public review period from June 3, 2021, through July 6, 2021, and is included as Attachment A to this staff report. Although the project was publicly noticed, there was an error in filing the draft document with the State Clearing House, which was published on July 8, 2021, with the review period ending on August 9, 2021, as the comment period cannot end on weekend. At the July 20, 2021, City Council meeting, the City Council opened the public hearing and continuing the item to the August 17, 2021, meeting after the State's comment period has concluded.

At the time of report preparation, the Planning Department one comment letter from the Rail Passenger Association of California and Nevada (RailPAC) included as Attachment C. The comment letter encourages that the project be coordinated with RCTC to accommodate future planned improvements to the rail line. Any additional comments received prior to the time of the scheduled City Council meeting will be provided to the Council at the time of the public hearing.

**Fiscal Impact:**

City staff time to prepare this staff report is approximately \$500.

**Recommended Action:**

Hold a continued public hearing,  
Adopt a Mitigated Negative Declaration and Mitigation and Monitoring Reporting Program for the Pennsylvania Avenue widening project, and  
Direct staff to prepare a Notice of Determination to be filed with the Riverside County Clerk Recorder.

**Attachments:**

- A. Draft Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration

B. Proof of Publication

C. RailPAC comment letter dated August 8, 2021

**Incorporated herein by Reference:**

City of Beaumont General Plan

City of Beaumont Zoning Ordinance

Project Site's Riverside Conservation Authority Multi-Species Habitat Conservation Plan  
Informational Map