

FEBRUARY 6, 2019  
FCTA Board Meeting  
Item V

Approval of Cooperative Agreement 06-1697 with the  
Department of Transportation (Caltrans)

**MIKE LEONARDO**  
Executive Director

**MEMORANDUM**

**TO:** Fresno County Transportation Authority  
**FROM:** Mike Leonardo, Executive Director  
**DATE:** February 6, 2019  
**SUBJECT:** SR180 West Project Initiation Document

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**RECOMMENDATION:** Approve a Cooperative Agreement with Caltrans to complete a Project Initiation Document for SR180 West between Mendota and Interstate 5 (2006 Measure C Expenditure Plan Rural Tier 1 Project H).

**DISCUSSION:** The 2006 Measure C Extension Expenditure Plan included a project to extend SR 180 from its existing terminus in Mendota to Interstate 5. The purpose of the project was to provide route continuity to Interstate 5 and to improve east-west circulation across Fresno County.

In 2013 Caltrans completed a Route Adoption Study Report for the entire SR180 corridor from the City of Fresno to Interstate 5. The Study Report identified a number of alternatives for the route of a future 4-lane Expressway. The Study Report concluded that from Fresno to Mendota, the existing SR180 alignment was preferred with some minor realignments near Kerman to bypass the urbanizing area of that community, and a bypass of Mendota. From Mendota to Interstate 5, the Study Report selected a preferred alternative that followed the Shields Avenue alignment. This alignment was selected after considerable outreach to the westside communities. Please see Attachment 1 to this report for the selected alignment.

By Resolution HRA 13-01, the California Transportation Commission accepted the findings of the Study Report and officially adopted the Route as described in the Study Report.

SR 180 West, Expenditure Plan Project H is the last remaining Rural Tier 1 project that has not yet received Measure C funding. The other Rural Tier 1 projects are either complete, or are in the environmental, design, right of way, or construction phases.

FCTA has discussed this project with Caltrans staff. It appears that there may be sufficient Measure C funds to build a 40' wide two-lane conventional highway along the Shields Avenue alignment that could be dedicated to Caltrans as SR180. This two-lane conventional highway

would be compatible with any future widening or upgrading as contemplated in the Route Adoption Report. Staff is proposing that Caltrans initiate a Project Initiation Document (PID) to determine the feasibility, cost, and schedule of this proposed 2-lane highway from Mendota to Interstate 5.

The Shields Avenue alignment has some advantages and some challenges. Shields is an existing 32' paved county road between Fairfax Avenue and Interstate 5 (approximately 9 miles). There is an existing interchange on Interstate 5 at Shields. Between Fairfax and SR33 north of Mendota (approximately 9 miles), Shields is only a line on a map. Fresno County has dedicated road easements for part of the distance, but the remainder is private farm property. Please see Attachment 2 to this report for details of Shields Avenue within these limits.

The San Joaquin Valley Railroad operates a rail line that is west of and parallel to SR33 at Shields Avenue. There is no grade crossing at Shields and it is highly unlikely the railroad would permit a new at-grade crossing at this location. As a result, any connection to SR33 would require a grade separation structure. Alternatively, if the Mendota bypass were built as a part of this project, the grade separation could be eliminated. These are some of the issues that Caltrans must address as a part of their PID.

Staff is recommending that the Board approve the proposed Cooperative Agreement with Caltrans to begin these studies. It is anticipated that a PID would cost \$300,000 and would take approximately nine months to complete. Provided the PID results in a feasible and fundable alternative, the next step would be to authorize Caltrans to begin environmental studies and preliminary engineering for a build project.