



## Memorandum

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**Date:** July 5, 2023

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**Subject:** Hueneme Road Widening Project HIPL-5952(215)  
Visual Impact Assessment Memorandum

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The California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) Visual Impact Assessment Checklist was completed for the Hueneme Road Widening Project (project) during preparation of the Preliminary Environmental Study (PES). The resulting score of the questionnaire was a 14, which indicated that a brief Visual Impact Assessment (VIA) Memorandum (memo) is the appropriate level of documentation to document that the project would not result in adverse visual impacts, and that further analysis is not required.

### **Regulatory Setting**

#### *Federal Regulations*

The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969, as amended, establishes that the federal government will use all practicable means to ensure all Americans safe, healthful, productive, aesthetically (emphasis added) and culturally pleasing surroundings (42 U.S.C. 4331[b][2]). The Federal Highway Administration, in its implementation of NEPA (23 U.S.C. 109[h]), directs that final decisions regarding projects are to be made in the best overall public interest taking into account adverse environmental impacts including, among others, the destruction or disruption of aesthetic values.

### *State Regulations*

The California Environmental Quality Act establishes that it is the policy of the state to take all action necessary to provide the people of the state “with...enjoyment of aesthetic, natural, scenic and historic environmental qualities” (California Public Resources Code Section 21001[b]).

### **Project Description**

The County of Ventura (County) proposes to widen an approximate 1.93-mile portion of Hueneme Road, between Edison Drive and Rice Avenue, from a two-lane roadway to a four-lane roadway with buffered bike lanes, a paved median, and turn lanes (see **Attachment A**, Project Location). The project is listed in the Southern California Association of Governments 2023 Federal Transportation Improvement Program for the fiscal years 2022/2023-2025/2026.

### *Existing Setting*

According to the County of Ventura General Plan (General Plan), Hueneme Road is identified as an Other Principal Arterial and Major Collector and a City of Port Hueneme and City of Oxnard Commercial Vehicle Route within the project area (County of Ventura, 2020b). Between Edison Drive and Rice Avenue, Hueneme Road includes two vehicle travel lanes, one in the eastbound direction and one in the westbound direction. At the western terminus of the project, Hueneme Road intersects with Edison Drive; the current configuration includes four vehicle travel lanes on Hueneme Road west of Edison Drive, two vehicle travel lanes on Hueneme Road east of Edison Drive, and two vehicle travel lanes on Edison Drive to the north and south of Hueneme Road. There are dedicated left-turn lanes in each direction at the intersection of Hueneme Road and Edison Drive. At the eastern terminus of the project, Hueneme Road intersects with Rice Avenue, creating a “T” intersection, where Rice Avenue dead-ends at Hueneme Road and the existing through lanes turn into left- and right-turn lanes. The current configuration includes four vehicle travel lanes on Rice Avenue, north of the “T” intersection, two vehicle travel lanes on Hueneme Road west of Rice Avenue, and two vehicle travel lanes of Hueneme Road east of Rice Avenue.

There is an existing drainage ditch on the north side of Hueneme Road, as well as several utility poles on the north and south sides of the roadway. There are several rows of trees tightly packed together adjacent to the roadway that are used as a wind break for crops and row crops/buildings located on parcels adjacent to the project area. According to the General Plan, adjacent land uses consist of Agriculture, Industrial, Commercial and Services, Transportation, Communications and Utilities, and Single-Family Residential. According to the California Department of Conservation Important Farmland Finder Map, land within the project area is designated as Prime Farmland, Farmland of Statewide Importance, and Urban & Built-Up Land.

### *Proposed Project*

The project would include four 12-foot through lanes (two in the eastbound direction and two westbound direction), a 14-foot paved median, two 6-foot bicycle lanes on either side of the roadway with a 2-foot buffer between the bicycle lanes and the traffic lanes, and two 4-foot shoulders on either side of Hueneme Road between Edison Drive and Rice Avenue. All existing left-turn lanes would be retained as part of the project. The total width of the new roadway would vary between 63 to 72 feet. The widened roadway

would taper to the existing configuration of one travel lane in each direction approximately 1,200 feet east of Rice Avenue.

The existing centerline of the road would be shifted as part of the roadway widening. Construction of the widened roadway would require a maximum ground disturbance of approximately 12-14 inches in depth to install the new roadbed. Widening of the roadway would result in approximately 339,000 square feet of increased impervious surface area. Surface runoff resulting from increased impervious surface area would sheet flow across the roadway, similar to existing conditions. It is anticipated that the existing drainage ditch on the north side of the roadway would be shifted north to accommodate the widening of the road. The limits of the relocated ditch would be within County right-of-way (ROW).

The project would require three traffic signal modifications, three drainage pipe and drainage inlet relocations, seven culvert extensions and relocations, 41 power pole relocations, and 10 irrigation and water facility relocations. The power poles along Hueneme Road are located within County ROW; however, coordination and preplanning would be needed with Southern California Edison (SCE) to relocate the poles prior to widening the roadway. The poles are approximately 55 feet in height. Additionally, Frontier Communications (Telecommunications) have facilities on the SCE overhead poles and underground lines along Hueneme Road. Sempra Utilities (Gas Company) has gas transmission mains along Hueneme Road near Edison Drive; the existing gas main may be impacted where the drainage ditch would be relocated. Signal pole relocations would require ground disturbance at a maximum depth of 16 feet. The project would not include the relocation of any water lines, recycled water lines, or sewer mains.

The project may include conforming 23 driveways located within the project area to the new roadway configuration. Construction would be staged to provide continuous access to each private parcel at all times. In addition, at least one lane would be open to provide continuous access for vehicles through the project area and no detours to adjacent roadways would be required. Due to traffic volumes in the area, night work is anticipated to avoid traffic impacts during construction.

The proposed improvements would require ROW and temporary construction easements (TCE). The project would require approximately 9.3 acres of permanent ROW from 30 properties. This would include 4.7 acres of Farmland of Statewide Importance, 4.5 acres of Prime Farmland, and 0.13 acres of Urban and Built-Up Land and Other Land. Additionally, the project would require TCEs from 3.53 acres of Prime Farmland, 3.73 Acres of Farmland of Statewide Importance, and 0.14 acres of Urban and Built-Up Land and Other Land.

Permanent ROW acquisition required to complete the project would include sliver takes from parcels adjacent to the project area; no full acquisitions are anticipated. The roadway widening may require removal of four buildings, including two fruit stands, one residence, and one garage. Vegetation removal would be required to accommodate the widening, and approximately 329 trees would also need to be removed. Tree removal would result in a vertical ground disturbance of approximately two feet below existing grade; a stump grinder would be used to remove the trunk and roots.

### **Visual Setting**

Hueneme Road between Edison Drive and Rice Avenue is located in a rural setting in Ventura County.

There is a mountain range visible from the roadway to the east of the project area. The project area is surrounded primarily by agricultural land uses. There are a few residences, two fruit stands, a plant nursery, farm equipment storage as well as some other commercial properties located along the corridor that contain mostly sparse, ornamental vegetation. Most of the land surrounding the corridor consists of crops and power lines running along the north side of Hueneme Road from Edison Drive to Rice Avenue. In addition to the crops located in the surrounding area, there are several rows of trees tightly packed together located along Hueneme Road between Olds Road and Caspar Road that are currently used as a wind break for the crops in the surrounding area. There is also sparse, weedy vegetation scattered throughout the existing corridor along the roadway.

Primary viewers that could be impacted by the project include viewers from the road and viewers of the road. Viewers from the road include those traveling along Hueneme Road in vehicles, on bicycles, or on foot. Viewers of the road could include any individuals who can see any portion of the project area from surrounding locations, including adjacent residences, commercial properties, or agricultural land.

The dominant view along Hueneme Road is the roadway corridor, as well as the surrounding agricultural land. North of Hueneme Road there are views of mostly agricultural crops as well as some residences and commercial properties. East of Hueneme Road there are views of a mountain range, agricultural crops, several residences, and commercial properties. Viewer exposure along Hueneme Road would be expected to vary depending on the time of day. During morning and afternoon “rush hour” periods, there are more vehicles along the corridor. Viewers from the road would likely have a higher awareness of changes in the visual setting, since they likely travel on the roadway often; however, they are expected to have a lower sensitivity to changes, since they are using the corridor for transportation purposes and moving at a speed of approximately 55 miles per hour. Viewers from the residences located near the intersection would likely have a higher exposure and higher sensitivity to changes since they live near the intersection and have higher awareness and sensitivity to changes in visual setting, since they are familiar with the existing landscape.

### **Visual Impacts**

During construction of the project, there would be temporary visual impacts associated with onsite storage of construction materials and debris. Because storage of construction materials would be located along the intersection, views of the construction materials would be apparent along the roadway. Residents that live along and near the intersection would be more likely to see the construction materials; however, construction-related materials would be in the project area temporarily, and once construction is complete all materials would be removed.

Proposed changes to the existing intersection would include widening of the roadway to include four 12-foot through lanes, a 14-foot paved median, two 6-foot bicycle lanes on either side of the roadway with a two-foot buffer between the bicycle lanes and the traffic lanes, and two 4-foot shoulders on either side of Hueneme Road between Edison Drive and Rice Avenue. Additionally, the project would require three traffic signal modifications, three drainage pipe and drainage inlet relocations, seven culvert extensions and relocations, 41 power pole relocations, and 10 irrigation and water facility relocations. Although utilities would need to be modified and relocated, there would be no new vertical elements introduced in

the project area that would block existing views.

The project may also require the demolition of four building structures located in the project area. This could alter the existing views of the project area; however, demolition of these structures would not detract from existing views because they are only a small portion of the existing corridor, and the removal of the existing structures would not diminish the overall visual character of the existing agricultural setting.

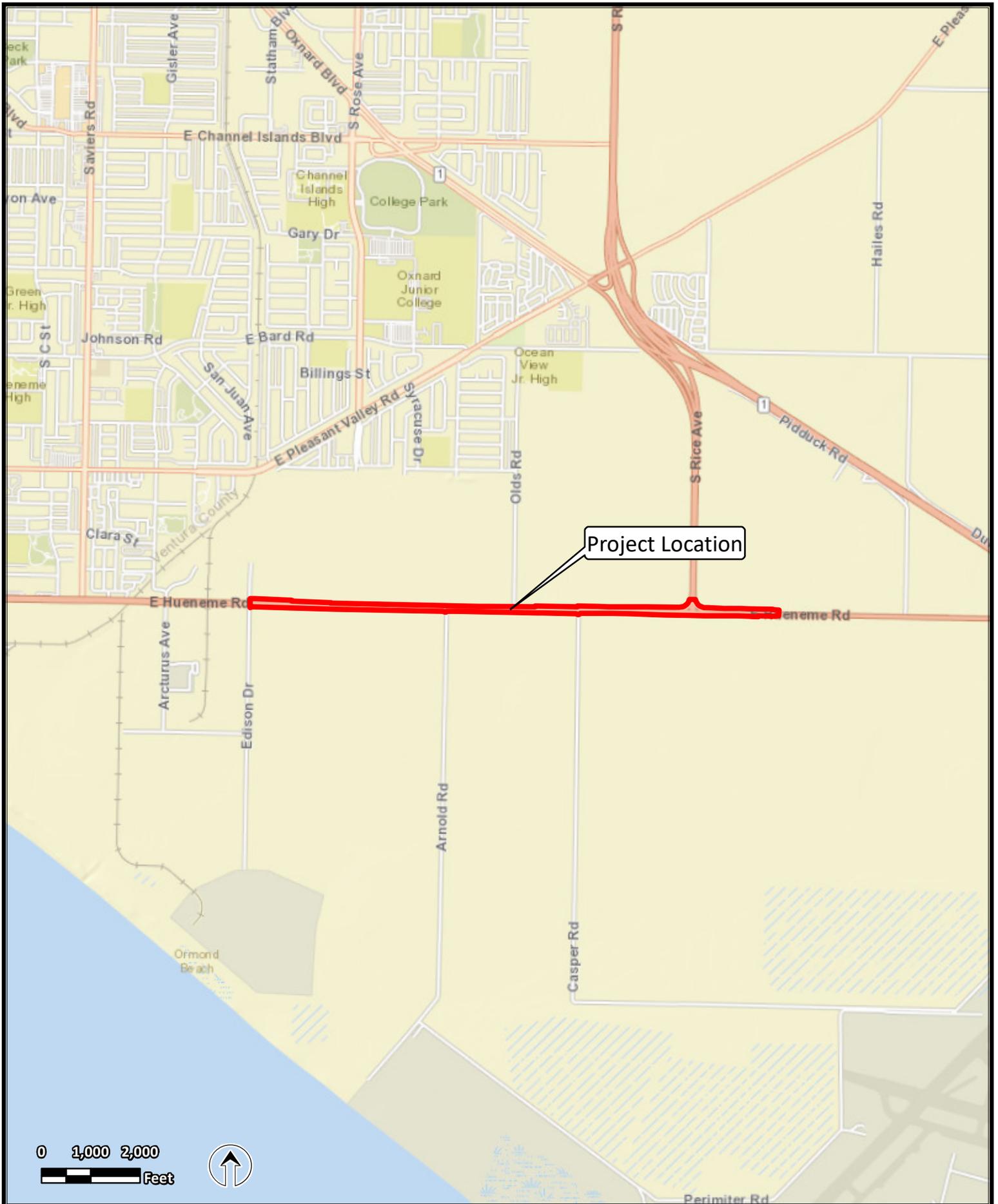
Approximately 329 trees would be removed from the project area to allow for the widening of the roadway and there are currently no plans to replace these trees. Tree removal would not detract from existing views because the majority of the trees that would be removed are used as a wind break and not to enhance visual character. In addition, the majority of the tree removal would take place between Olds Road and Caspar Road, which is only a small segment of the project area. The tree removal would expose more agricultural crops as well as a building structure. Similar views are already present along portions of the corridor and would not disrupt the visual character. The removal of these trees would also provide a clearer view of the existing background, which includes the mountain range to the east of the project area.

### Conclusions

The project would include intersection improvements that would accommodate additional lanes, a median, bicycle lanes, buffers, and shoulders along Hueneme Road. No new vertical elements would be introduced to the project area. Existing viewers would not be expected to react negatively to the proposed improvements. During construction of the project, there would be temporary visual impacts associated with onsite storage of construction materials and debris, and other construction activities that would be visible to viewers in the area; however, construction activities would be temporary, and the materials would be removed once construction is complete. The project would require demolition of four building structures as well as permanent tree removal with no plans for replacement of the trees; however, demolition of the structure and removal of trees would not diminish the overall visual character of the existing setting. The project would not be expected to result in substantially adverse visual effects and visual impacts related to the project are anticipated to be less than significant; therefore, no formal visual analysis is required.



**Attachment A. Project Location Map**



Sources: ESRI 2022.

## ATTACHMENT A. PROJECT LOCATION Hueneme Road Widening Project