CHAPTER 5.0 PROJECT ALTERNATIVES

5.1 Rationale for Alternative Selection

CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.6 requires that an EIR:

> *…describe a range of reasonable alternatives to the project, or to the location of the project, which would feasibly attain most of the basic objectives of the project, but would avoid or substantially lessen any of the significant effects of the project, and evaluate the comparative merits of the alternatives.*

Additionally, CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.6 states in part:

> *An EIR need not consider every conceivable alternative to a project. Rather, it must consider a reasonable range of potentially feasible alternatives that will foster informed decision-making and public participation. An EIR is not required to consider alternatives that are infeasible (15126.6(a)).*

CEQA Guidelines also require evaluation of a No Project Alternative. Based on this guidance, the following reasonable range of alternatives have been identified for evaluation in this section:

1. No Project Alternative
2. No Roundabout Alternative
3. Four-Lane Corridor Alternative

Table S-1, Comparison of Impacts of Proposed Project and Alternatives, the alternatives considered below are compared to the Project. The discussion below provides an assessment of each Project alternative relative to its ability to meet the basic Project objectives identified in Section 2.1 of this EIR.

5.2 Analysis of the No Project Alternative (Alternative 1)

5.2.1 No Project Alternative Description and Setting

The No Project Alternative (Alternative 1) considers the continuation of the existing configuration of the Project corridor. Under this alternative, there would be no physical changes in the Project corridor, and the existing conditions would remain unchanged, including the "Lane Diet" improvements completed in 2012 (i.e., one "through" vehicle lane and a Class II bike lane in the northbound direction, and a "through" vehicle lane and a shared vehicle/bicycle lane in the southbound direction).

5.2.2 Comparison of the Effects of the No Project Alternative to the Proposed Project

The No Project Alternative would eliminate the significant cumulative and unavoidable traffic impacts associated with the proposed Project, as well as the significant and unavoidable impact on emergency response, as no improvements would occur. However, this alternative would have the following greater impacts on air quality, hydrology, water quality, and public safety compared to the proposed Project:

1. Greater traffic volumes due to increased population growth (per SANDAG 2035 projections) are expected within the Project corridor which would result in greater mobile-source criteria air pollutant emissions than the proposed Project, which would provide better multi-modal transportation options along the corridor through: (a) pedestrian and bicycle improvements (i.e., striping to reduce the number/width of vehicle lanes, added/ enhanced bicycle lanes/facilities, shared vehicle/bicycle lanes, expanded sidewalks, and added/ enhanced pedestrian facilities); and (b) encouraging use of mass transit (i.e., enhanced pedestrian crosswalks at uncontrolled intersections near bus stops and two new signalized pedestrian crossings).
2. The lack of drainage improvements would result in continued ponding of water on roadway surfaces after rain events in various locations throughout the Project corridor which could lead to more traffic accidents due to hydroplaning of vehicle tires. In addition, the lack of increased landscaping within the Project corridor would maintain the existing runoff coefficient, resulting in continued and future net increases in peak flows.
3. The lack of new bioretention areas within the Project corridor to provide water quality treatment, as well as flow-control measures, would result in continued and future net increases in contaminated runoff entering the storm drain system and downstream Ocean outfalls.
4. The lack of removal of aged eucalyptus trees in the median which pose a potentially hazardous condition (i.e., falling limbs) that occasionally results in damage to vehicles, and to injuries to pedestrians and cyclists, would result in continued and future need for emergency services to respond to an increased number of incidents.

It should be noted that this alternative would not be consistent with the N101SP goals to improve the Project corridor as is currently being proposed. As such, it would not result in any improvements along the corridor that are proposed with the Project to achieve the identified objectives. For these reasons, the No Project Alternative is not considered the Environmentally Superior Alternative, and it does not meet any of the Project objectives.

5.3 Analysis of the No Roundabout Alternative (Alternative 2)

5.3.1 No Roundabout Alternative Description and Setting

The No Roundabout Alternative (Alternative 2) considers more traditional intersection controls along the Project corridor; please refer to Design Alternative 5 in Appendix B of this EIR. Under this alternative, there would be four signalized intersections rather than six roundabouts (under the proposed Project); the number of NB travel lanes would increase from one (under the proposed Project) to two; vehicle speeds would increase from 30 mph (under the proposed Project) to 35 mph; the amount of parking would be reduced to fewer parking spaces (parallel only) rather than reverse-angle parking providing a greater number of spaces (under the proposed Project); and fewer trees would be planted with less of a tree canopy compared to the proposed Project. This alternative would provide two 10-foot wide travel lanes in both the northbound and southbound directions, with the travel lanes predominantly occupying the same locations as the existing travel lanes. Bike lanes would have a 5-foot minimum and 6-foot maximum width in the northbound direction, and a 5-foot minimum and 7-foot maximum width in the southbound direction. Overall, this alternative would provide improvements similar to the existing street configuration and would utilize traffic signals to control the intersections.

5.3.2 Comparison of the Effects of the No Roundabout Alternative to the Proposed Project

While this alternative would still provide for multi-modal functions and road diet measures, there would be fewer of those features than under the proposed Project because roundabout intersection controls are considered to be superior to traffic signals in terms of traffic calming. Emergency response times along the corridor would be improved with this alternative, compared to the proposed Project, due to the increase in traffic speeds from 30 mph to 35 mph, and emergency vehicles would not have to slow down in order to negotiate roundabouts. However, the use of parallel parking with this alternative instead of reverse-angle parking with the proposed Project would not eliminate the existing sight-distance problems and vehicular conflicts with bicyclists.

It is unknown whether this alternative would result in less or greater traffic impacts than the proposed Project because the replacement of roundabouts with traffic signals would only improve traffic flow through the corridor if all signals were synchronized during peak hours, whereas traffic speeds would be artificially controlled as vehicles must slow down to negotiate each roundabout. However, under this alternative, the City would not be able to maintain traffic signal synchronization all day through the corridor during periods of increased traffic volumes for events such as street fairs, surf contests, beach concerts, classic car shows, and the general travel increases in summer months due to the San Diego County Fair, Del Mar Racetrack horse racing season, and the influx of beach-going tourists. During such periods, the Project corridor would continue to experience heavy congestion and backup, as it does now, and this could cause LOS degradation of not only the one intersection in the Project corridor that would be significantly impacted under the proposed Project, but many more as well.

In summary, the No Roundabout Alternative would result in greater public safety impacts compared to the proposed Project with respect to conflicts between vehicles and bicyclists and pedestrians. In addition, this alternative would provide less parking and beautification improvements than the proposed Project. Therefore, this alternative would not meet three of the Project Objectives listed in Section 2.1.

5.4 Analysis of the Four-Lane Corridor Alternative (Alternative 3)

5.4.1 Four-Lane Corridor Alternative Description and Setting

The Four-Lane Corridor Alternative (Alternative 3) originated from the public outreach/workshop process for the proposed Project, as described in Appendix C of this EIR, and would improve the Level of Service (LOS) and emergency response times along the Project corridor over that of the proposed Project. Under this alternative, the Project corridor would be improved with two lanes in each direction (NB and SB) running continuously through all proposed roundabouts, in addition to the proposed bike lanes and enhanced sidewalks. This alternative would (generally) provide two 10-foot wide travel lanes in both the northbound and southbound directions. Bike lanes would have a 5-foot minimum and 6-foot maximum width in the northbound direction, and a 5-foot minimum and 7-foot maximum width in the southbound direction.

5.4.2 Comparison of the Effects of the Four-Lane Corridor Alternative to the Proposed Project

Emergency response times along the corridor would be improved with this alternative, compared to the proposed Project, due to the increase in travel lanes and traffic speeds (from 30 mph to 35 mph). Emergency vehicles would not have to slow down to negotiate the roundabouts, to the same degree as with the proposed Project, because they would include four lanes instead of two. This alternative would result in lesser traffic impacts than the proposed Project due to four continuous lanes through the entire corridor. In addition, this alternative would meet all of the Project Objectives.

5.5 Environmentally Superior Alternative

The Four-Lane Corridor Alternative is considered the Environmentally Superior Alternative because it would reduce emergency response times and traffic impacts associated with the proposed Project, and it also meets the Project objectives. However, this alternative would be economically infeasible due to the large amount of private property acquisitions that would be required adjacent to the corridor to accommodate the increase in right-of-way needed for all of the proposed improvements associated with four continuous travel lanes, bike lanes, on-street reverse-angle parking spaces, and enhanced sidewalks.