San Gabriel Valley Greenway Network Strategic Implementation Plan Statement of Overriding Considerations

SCH #2022090340

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SECTION 1 Introduction

1.1 Purpose and Organization of this Document

This Statement of Overriding Considerations (State Clearinghouse No. 2020070128) has been prepared according to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) (California Public Resources Code Section 21000, et seq.) and the State CEQA Guidelines (California Code of Regulations, Title 14, Chapter 3) to evaluate and disclose the potential environmental impacts associated with implementation of the proposed San Gabriel Valley (SGV) Greenway Network Strategic Implementation Plan (Plan; Project) in Los Angeles County, California. Los Angeles County (County), through Los Angeles County Public Works (Public Works), is serving as lead agency under CEQA for the San Gabriel Valley Network Strategic Implementation Plan Program Environmental Impact Report (PEIR). The Final PEIR presents the environmental information and analyses that have been prepared for the proposed Project, including comments received addressing the Draft PEIR, and responses to those comments. The Final PEIR will be used by the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors in the decision-making process for the proposed Project on behalf of the County, as well as the Los Angeles County Flood Control District. The following discussion is organized in accordance with the topics outlined in Appendix G of the State CEQA Guidelines by significant and unavoidable impacts identified for the project in the PEIR. Where feasible mitigation measures have been identified and incorporated into the Project to avoid and/or minimize impacts to the extent feasible, these measures are included in the impact discussions below.

SECTION 2 Significant and Unavoidable Environmental Impacts

2.1 Aesthetics

Impact 1(c): In urbanized areas, implementation of the Plan could conflict with applicable zoning and other regulations governing scenic quality. (All Plan components; Construction and Operation). In an urbanized area, depending on the specific location of individual projects, implementation of the Plan could conflict with applicable zoning and other regulations governing scenic quality. The County is not subject to compliance with the zoning and municipal codes of incorporated cities, therefore, projects implemented by the County could conflict with local regulation governing scenic quality during both construction activity and long-term operation of projects implemented under the Plan. Therefore, impacts for both the construction and operations of projects would be potentially significant and unavoidable.

2.2 Agriculture and Forestry Resources

Impact 2(b). Implementation of the Plan could conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use, or a Williamson Act contract. (All Plan components; Construction and Operation). Depending on the specific location of subsequent individual projects developed under the Plan, for all Plan components, impacts for both the construction and operations of Projects implemented under the Plan could be potentially significant and unavoidable. Projects developed under the Plan that are constructed on urbanized land in the District ROW, and along streets, sidewalks, and in parks or other public lands or private lands adjacent to the District ROW that are not zoned for agricultural or forestry land uses would not result in any conflicts. However, it is possible the County or other public entity which is not subject to municipal zoning codes, could implement a future project under the Plan proposed on lands zoned for agriculture for which open space/recreational development is not a designated allowed or permitted use, the project proponent might be required to consult with the California Department of Conservation (CDOC) and local municipalities to determine if zoning changes, conditional use permits, or agricultural offsets (e.g., easements, in-lieu mitigation, etc.) would be required to develop the parcel under the Plan. The County is not subject to permitting requirements and compliance with local jurisdiction land use codes, therefore, projects implemented by the County could conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use, which would be a significant and unavoidable impact.

Impact 2(c). Implementation of the Plan could conflict with existing zoning for, or cause rezoning of, forest land (as defined in Public Resources Code Section 12220(g)), timberland (as defined by Public Resources Code Section 4526), or timberland zoned Timberland Production (as defined by Government Code Section 51104(g)). (All Plan components; Construction and Operation). Future projects implemented under the Plan would primarily be constructed and operated on urbanized public and private land primarily in the District ROW and on public and private parcels adjacent to the ROW, typically on other lands owned by municipalities within the Plan Area. Private parcels could be acquired in the future for the purposes of development under the Plan. Greenway paths, amenities, and other

components constructed and operated under the Plan may provide amenities near or new connections to forested areas, particularly urban forests and in some cases may include proposed trails through said forests. Such proposed projects could potentially conflict with existing zoning for or cause rezoning of forest land. It is possible that the County or other public entity that is not subject to municipal zoning codes could implement projects that are proposed on lands categorized as forest, for which open space/recreational use is not a designated allowable use or permitted use, this would be considered a potentially significant impact. The project proponent may be required to consult with local municipalities to determine if zoning changes, conditional use permits, or other regulatory processes would be required to develop the parcel under the Plan. The County is not subject to permitting requirements and compliance with local jurisdiction land use codes, therefore, projects implemented by the County could conflict with existing zoning for forest land which would be a significant and unavoidable impact.

Impact 2(d). Implementation of the Plan could result in the loss of forest land or conversion of forest land to non-forest use. (All Plan components; Construction and Operation). Future projects implemented under the Plan would primarily be constructed and operated on urbanized public and private land primarily in the District ROW and/or on parcels adjacent to the ROW, typically on other lands owned by municipalities within the Plan Area. Private parcels could be acquired in the future for the purposes of developing under the Plan. Greenway paths, amenities, and other components constructed and operated under the Plan may provide amenities near or new connections to forested areas, particularly urban forests and in some cases may include proposed trails through said forests. Such proposed projects could potentially result in the conversion of forest land to non-forest use. Also, the County or other public entity that is not subject to local zoning codes could implement projects that are proposed on lands categorized as forest, for which open space/recreational use is not a designated allowable use or permitted use, this would be considered a potentially significant impact. The proponent may be required to consult with local municipalities to determine if zoning changes, conditional use permits, or other regulatory processes would be required to develop the parcel under the Plan. The County is not subject to permitting requirements and compliance with local jurisdiction land use codes; therefore, projects implemented by the County could result in the conversion of forest land to non-forest use, which would be a significant and unavoidable impact.

Impact 2(e). Implementation of the Plan could involve other changes in the existing environment which, due to their location or nature, could result in conversion of Farmland, to non-agricultural use or conversion of forest land to non-forest use. (All Plan components; Construction and Operation). Projects implemented under the Plan would be constructed and operated on urbanized land in the District ROW and adjacent parcels; however, the acquisition of private parcels for development of projects under the Plan could result in impacts to agricultural land or forest land, as discussed previously under 2(a-d). It is possible that the County or other public entity that is not subject to local zoning may implement a project on lands categorized as forest or agricultural land, for which open space/recreation is not a designated allowable or permitted use, this would be considered a potentially significant impact. The proponent would be required to consult with local municipalities to determine if zoning changes, conditional use permits, or other regulatory processes would be required to develop the parcel under the Plan. The County is not subject to permitting requirements and compliance with local jurisdiction land use codes; therefore, projects implemented by the County could convert farmland to non-agricultural use or forest land to non-forest use, which would be a significant and unavoidable impact.

2.3 Air Quality

Impact 3(c). Implementation of the Plan could expose sensitive receptors to substantial pollutant concentrations. (Greenway Paths + Pocket Parks and Greenspaces, Greenway Paths + Safe Crossings; Construction). Depending on the location of projects within the Plan Area, construction of Greenway Paths + Pocket Parks and Greenspaces, and Greenway Paths + Safe Crossings, would result in potentially significant and unavoidable impacts due to the exposure of sensitive receptors to pollution construction. For the construction of Greenway Paths + Parks and Greenspaces, specifically those projects that include 25-acre greenspaces and that are within 1,000 feet of existing sensitive receptors, it is conservatively assumed that there may be instances in which diesel particulate matter (DPM) emissions exceed South Coast Air Quality Management District (SCAQMD) thresholds. Implementation of **MM AQ-1: Emission Reduction Measures,** such as using Tier 4 Final off-road diesel construction equipment, would substantially reduce on-site diesel particulate matter (DPM) emissions from off-road equipment. In addition, implementation of **MM AQ-2: Health Risk Assessment and Health Risk Reduction Measures** would require a site-specific construction Health Risk Assessment. For 25-acre greenspace projects that exceed the SCAQMD project-level thresholds, additional on-site mitigation shall be analyzed by the implementing agency to reduce risks to the greatest extent practicable. Because it cannot be concluded what the result of the project-level evaluation will be without speculation, it is possible that mitigation for future project health risks may be inadequate to reduce construction impacts below the SCAQMD's threshold level.

For the construction of Greenway Paths + Safe Crossings, impacts would be potentially significant and unavoidable, for those projects with anticipated construction duration of greater than two months that are located within 1,000 feet of sensitive receptors. Implementation of **MM AQ-1: Emission Reduction Measures** would substantially reduce on-site emissions DPM from off-road equipment, but may not reduce emissions below SCAQMD thresholds. In addition, implementation of **MM AQ-2: Health Risk Assessment and Health Risk Reduction Measures** would require a site-specific construction Health Risk Assessment. For safe crossing projects that exceed the SCAQMD project-level thresholds, additional on-site mitigation shall be analyzed by the implementing agency to reduce risks to the greatest extent practicable. Because it cannot be concluded what the result of the project-level evaluation will be without speculation, it is possible that mitigation for future project health risks may be inadequate to reduce construction impacts below the SCAQMD's threshold level.

2.4 Biological Resources

Impact 4(e). Implementation of the Plan could conflict with any local policies or ordinances protecting biological resources, such as a tree preservation policy or ordinance. (All Plan components; Construction). Depending on location within the Plan Area, construction of projects implemented under the Plan may result in significant and unavoidable impacts. Any protected trees within or near the project footprint would be identified during the desktop review (**MM BIO-1: Desktop Review and Surveys**), and the project proponent would be required to implement **MM BIO-5: Conduct Biological Monitoring** as needed, to be consistent with local tree protection ordinances. However, at the program level, site-specific jurisdiction and the regulatory requirements are currently unknown and therefore could be potentially significant. Further, the County or other public entity that is not subject to municipal zoning codes may implement a project; therefore, even with mitigation, implementation may

include the trimming or removal of trees in a manner that conflicts with local policies and ordinances. Therefore, construction impacts would potentially be significant and unavoidable.

2.5 Hazards and Hazardous Materials

Impact 9(g). Implementation of the Plan could expose people or structures, either directly or indirectly, to a significant risk of loss, injury or death involving wildland fires. (All Plan components; Construction and Operation). Areas designated as Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zones (VHFHSZs) along the edge of the Angeles National Forest are within the Plan Area. Depending on future individual project locations, staging areas and construction zones for greenway paths, greenway amenities, pocket parks and greenspaces, safe crossings, and stormwater management facilities could potentially occur on the District ROW and adjacent parcels where they fall within or near lands classified as VHFSZ. Implementation of **MM WF-1: Construction Coordination with Emergency and Fire Services** would prepare local response agencies for responding to fires on future project sites. Electric utility construction would be conducted by qualified experts who would follow proper safety procedure required by California Public Utilities Commission and structures requiring electricity would be required to be built in accordance with California Building Code requirements. To reduce the risk of fire during construction activity, project proponents shall implement **MM WF-1: Construction Coordination with Emergency and Fire Services** and **MM WF-2: Prepare a Construction Fire Protection Plan**, and **MM FW-4: Post-Fire Risk Reduction Plan**. Nonetheless, construction associated with projects located in VHFHSZs would have the potential to exacerbate the existing wildfire risk which may expose people or structures, either directly or indirectly, to a significant risk of loss, injury or death involving wildland fires. Therefore, construction impacts would be significant and unavoidable.

Operational impacts would result from the expected increase in number of daily users to project sites as well as routine maintenance of landscaping and amenities. **MM WF-3: Prepare a Fire Protection Plan** would be implemented to ensure compliance with local and State regulations regarding fire risk; however, it cannot be guaranteed that projects within or adjacent to VHFSZs would not expose people or structures to loss involved in wildland fire risk and therefore operational impacts are significant and unavoidable.

2.6 Land Use and Planning

Impact 11(b). Implementation of the Plan may conflict with any 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. (All Plan components; Construction and Operation). All greenway paths, greenway amenities, pocket parks, safe crossings, and stormwater management facilities would be developed within and adjacent to the District ROW. To construct a project on District ROW, a project proponent would generally be required to obtain a permit, lease, use agreement and/or other authorization from the District. In addition, portions of projects within incorporated areas would be under the land use jurisdiction of those incorporated cities or other public entity and a project proponent may also have to apply for a land use permit or other approval from that public entity, in addition to a permit from the District for the portion of the project proposed to be located on District ROW. As discussed in Section 2.3.2, the *Design Guidelines and Standards* are focused on multi-use for

pedestrians. For projects proposed entirely within County or District jurisdiction, compliance with the *Design Guidelines and Standards* would ensure compliance with County land use or District policies and impacts would be less than significant. However, for projects that are proposed in incorporated cities or another public entities' jurisdiction, compliance with the *Design Guidelines and Standards* may conflict with the land use policies or regulations of the municipality or public entity's jurisdiction in which the project is located. While land use permitting, if required, may be achieved through a conditional use permit, variance, zoning amendment, and/or specific plan amendment, these land use conflicts may result in significant and unavoidable impacts.

2.7 Noise

Impact 13(a). Implementation of the Plan could generate a substantial temporary or permanent increase in ambient noise levels in the vicinity of the project in excess of standards established in the local general plan or noise ordinance, or applicable standards of other agencies. (All Plan components; Construction and Operation). Depending on the location of a future project within the Plan Area and its proximity to sensitive receptors, short-term construction noise impacts could result from demolition activities; land clearing and grading; construction of greenway paths, greenway amenities, pocket parks, greenspaces, safe crossings, and stormwater management; transportation of materials, workers, and equipment to the project site; and operation of the construction equipment. Implementation of **MM AQ-1: Emission Reduction Measures** would require zero-emission and near-zero emission construction equipment (i.e., electric or hydrogen-powered heavy equipment) that operates much quieter than traditional diesel-powered equipment (estimated at 10 dB reduction compared to diesel versions), reducing noise levels associated with construction activities up to 25 dB at nearby sensitive receptors. In addition, for future projects implemented under the Plan within 200 feet of a sensitive receptor or where the estimated construction noise levels identified in Table 3.13-10 propagated to the nearest receptor (i.e., assuming an attenuation rate of 6 dB per double of distance) would exceed the noise ordinance of the respective jurisdiction, implementation of **MM NOI-1: Prepare Construction Noise/Vibration Work and Mitigation Monitoring Plan** would minimize noise levels to the extent feasible but may not reduce noise to less than significant levels. In these cases, construction noise impacts would remain potentially significant and unavoidable.

For the operations of future projects, the implementation of **MM NOI-2: Prepare Focused Noise Study and Noise Reduction Measures** would require a focused noise study be conducted and identify appropriate noise reduction measures or engineering BMPs to reduce exterior noise below applicable limits as needed. However, despite those measures, operational impacts may still cause a temporary or permanent increase in ambient noise levels in the vicinity of the project in excess of standards established in the local general plan or noise ordinance, or applicable standards of other agencies. In some circumstances, noise-attenuating features (e.g., soundwalls and acoustical shielding) applied to reduce noise levels to below the applicable threshold may be infeasible or inapplicable. Therefore, operational noise impacts would remain potentially significant and unavoidable.

Impact 13(b). Implementation of the Plan could result in the generation of excessive groundborne vibration or groundborne noise levels. (All Plan components; Construction). Because the specific locations of future projects are currently unknown, depending on the proximity to sensitive receptors and project-specific construction methods, vibration levels may exceed the Federal Transit

Administration (FTA) thresholds for Construction Vibration Damage Criteria (Table 3.13-8) and Annoyance Criteria (Table 3.13-9). Therefore, impacts related to construction vibration are potentially significant. For projects within 200 feet of a sensitive receptor, implementation of **MM NOI-1: Prepare Construction Noise/Vibration Work and Mitigation Monitoring Plan** would require a project-specific noise and vibration study and implementation of noise reduction strategies to reduce noise and vibration levels, including measures such as using less vibration-intensive construction equipment, timing construction so structures would not be occupied when high levels of vibration are expected, and/or informing residents of the timing of construction and that vibration may be noticeable during these times. Despite those measures, construction vibration impacts may still exceed the significance threshold for construction vibration in certain circumstances where sensitive receptors are near vibration-inducing construction activities. Therefore, where vibration reduction measures are either not feasible or would not reduce vibration to below the applicable threshold, construction vibration impacts would remain potentially significant and unavoidable.

2.8 Recreation

Impact 16 (b). Implementation of the Plan would include recreational facilities or require the construction or expansion of recreational facilities which might have an adverse physical effect on the environment. (All Plan components; Construction and Operation). Construction of future projects would result in temporary, localized impacts to the physical environment, including from construction-related emissions and noise. Impacts from construction or expansion of recreational facilities may be potentially significant and unavoidable or have mitigation measures assigned that reduce impacts to less than significant, as discussed in each of these resource analyses in the PEIR. The majority of potentially significant construction impacts for individual projects implemented under the Plan would be mitigated to less than significant; however, since the location of an individual project could be near sensitive receptors, construction impacts to the physical environment would be significant and unavoidable.

2.9 Transportation

Impact 17(a). Implementation of the Plan could conflict with a program, plan, ordinance, or policy addressing the circulation system, including transit, roadway, bicycle and pedestrian facilities. (All Plan components; Construction). Depending on location, a future project implemented under the Plan could conflict with a local program, plan, ordinance or policy addressing the circulation system. Once a project is proposed at a specific location, **MM TR-1: Construction Transportation Management Plan** requires the preparation and implementation of a project-specific Construction Transportation Management Plan that will identify the location and timing of temporary closures and detours with the goal of maintaining traffic flow, especially during peak periods as well as minimize impacts to pedestrians and bicyclists when bike lanes or sidewalks must be closed. Implementation of **MM TR-2: Restrict Lane Closures and Maintain Access** would further minimize impacts to circulation by limiting lane closures to off-peak periods to reduce traffic delays as well as requiring access to schools, residential areas, and business be maintained. Additionally, a future project within or abutting a Caltrans right of way shall not occur unless authorized by an encroachment permit. To avoid conflicts between construction activities and pedestrians and bicyclists, **MM TR-3: Closure Notification and Detours** would require advanced notice and detours and/or safe areas along the construction zone when construction results in temporary

closures of sidewalks, other pedestrian facilities, and bike paths/routes. In addition, implementation of **MM TR-4: Notify Emergency Personnel of Road Closures** would reduce construction impacts to emergency services by providing advanced notification of proposed lane closures to emergency personnel. However, project-specific circumstances from construction of project components could still result in unforeseen circumstances such as temporary closures being unable to maintain traffic flow during peak period resulting in a significant impact. Temporary closures may also result in increased congestion necessitating alternative routes, and potentially forcing existing traffic to take longer trips along local roadways. With implementation of the above mitigation measures, the magnitude of transportation and circulation impacts are expected to be reduced, but these measures cannot guarantee avoidance of all significant impacts for every project. Therefore, proposed project components may result in a conflict with programs, plans, or policies addressing the circulation system, or transit, roadway, bicycle, or pedestrian facilities, through the possible increase in congestion and vehicle miles traveled (VMT) from temporary facilities closures.

Impact 17(b). Implementation of the Plan could conflict or be inconsistent with CEQA Guidelines section 15064.3, subdivision (b). (Greenway Paths + Pocket Parks and Greenspaces; Operations). For projects implemented under the Plan that include any components other than the largest greenspace considered (25-acres), impacts would be less than significant. However, if a project developed under the Plan included that largest size park considered (25-acre greenspace) which could include sports fields and playgrounds, it would potentially generate substantially more net daily trips resulting in potentially significant and unavoidable VMT impacts. Implementation of **MM TR-5: Determine VMT Based on Type of Subsequent Project** would require that a project-specific VMT analysis be performed using the County's Transportation Impact Assessment (TIA) impact criteria for VMT that have been developed based on guidance from Governor's Office of Land Use and Climate Innovation and California Air Resources Board. If a proposed project cannot be screened out and the VMT is determined to exceed the applicable thresholds based on the applicable guideline and project type, then implementation of **MM TR-6: Implement Transportation Demand Management Strategies and/or Enhancements to Reduce VMT** would be required. This mitigation measure would require implementation of transportation demand management strategies such as increasing transit accessibility, relocating a project in order to be adjacent to transit, and/or pricing any provided parking to discourage vehicle trips. However, depending on the project location and number of vehicle trips generated as a result of operations, in some circumstances, transportation demand management strategies applied to reduce transportation impacts may not reduce impacts below the applicable threshold or may be infeasible. Therefore, operation of projects implemented under the Plan could have a potentially significant and unavoidable transportation impact.

Impact 17(c). Implementation of the Plan could substantially increase hazards due to a geometric design feature (e.g., sharp curves or dangerous intersections) or incompatible uses (e.g., farm equipment). (All Plan components; Construction). Depending on the location of a project within the Plan Area, construction activities could substantially increase hazards due to a geometric design feature or incompatible uses, such that impacts could be potentially significant and unavoidable. The project-specific construction transportation management plan shall provide a traffic control plan that would minimize hazards associated with construction activities. However, depending on the project location, in some circumstances, the measures outlined in **MM TR-1: Construction Transportation Management Plan** applied to reduce transportation impacts during construction may not reduce impacts below the

applicable threshold or may be infeasible. Therefore, construction activities may result in a potentially significant and unavoidable impact related to hazards due to the presence of an existing geometric design feature (e.g., sharp curve or dangerous intersection) at the specific project site.

Impact 17(d). Implementation of the Plan may result in inadequate emergency access. (All Plan components; Construction). Depending on the location of future projects, construction activities could result in inadequate emergency access due to temporary road closures. Implementation of **MM TR-1: Construction Transportation Management Plan**, would require project proponents to develop a construction transportation management plan to identify appropriate lane closures/routing and detours. This information would also be provided to local emergency providers to ensure adequate access and travel for emergency vehicles is maintained. However, depending on the project location and construction activities and/or feasibility of mitigation measures, in some circumstances, emergency access could be impeded. Therefore, impacts related emergency access during construction of future projects could remain potentially significant and unavoidable.

2.10 Tribal Cultural Resources

Impact 18(a). Implementation of the Plan could cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a tribal cultural resource, defined in Public Resources Code section 21074 as either a site, feature, place, cultural landscape that is geographically defined in terms of the size and scope of the landscape, sacred place, or object with cultural value to a California Native American tribe, and that is: (i) Listed or eligible for listing in the California Register of Historical Resources, or in a local register of historical resources as defined in Public Resources Code section 5020.1(k), or (ii) A resource determined by the lead agency, in its discretion and supported by substantial evidence, to be significant pursuant to criteria set forth in subdivision (c) of Public Resources Code Section 5024.1. In applying the criteria set forth in subdivision (c) of Public Resource Code Section 5024.1, the lead agency shall consider the significance of the resource to a California Native American tribe. (All Plan components; Construction and Operation). Construction activities for each of the project components may involve ground disturbance, construction equipment operation, stockpiling of materials, and views of partially built or installed structures. These construction activities have the potential to cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a tribal cultural resource (TCR) if the resource is present at or near a future project site through both direct destruction of the resource or indirectly due to localized noise, dust, traffic, and vibration. In order to avoid and/or minimize impacts to such resources, project proponents would be required to implement MM TCR-1: Tribal Cultural Resources Assessment and conduct a site-specific records search and pedestrian survey of the project site in advance of construction activity. If no potential resources are identified in the assessment or through consultation, the potential for impacts would be considered less than significant at the project level. However, if results from MM TCR-1 shows positive results for a TCR or a TCR is identified by the lead agency through the consultation process, and if construction could result in a substantial adverse change in the significance of the TCR, then the impact would be considered significant. The effects and individual circumstances of a future project's impacts on TCRs cannot be known at this time, as individual site reconnaissance and consultation has not been completed. While **MM TCR-1: Tribal Cultural Resources Assessment, MM TCR-2: Avoid Cultural and Tribal Cultural Resources, Prepare Treatment Plan, MM TCR-4: Conduct Native American Monitoring, and MM TCR-3: Unanticipated Discovery** would reduce impacts to TCRs, impacts could still be

significant. Accordingly, the potential for construction activity to cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of archaeological resources would be significant and unavoidable.

An increase in users to recreational resources near TCRs could indirectly and directly degrade resources through increased erosion, unanticipated destruction of in situ resources, and destruction or removal by facility users. While no further ground disturbance would occur following the completion of construction activities, and consideration of any present TCRs would have been addressed as part of the project design and construction process, unanticipated impacts by recreational users at future project locations could be significant. Therefore, potential impacts to TCRs during operation of projects implemented under the Plan could potentially be significant and unavoidable.

2.11 Wildfire

Impact 20(a). Implementation of the Plan could substantially impair an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan. (All Plan components; Construction). Due to the programmatic nature of Plan, the location and design of future projects cannot be determined at this time. However, it can reasonably be assumed that staging areas and construction zones for greenway paths, greenway amenities, pocket parks and greenspaces, safe crossings, and stormwater management facilities could occur on the District ROW and adjacent parcels where they fall within or near State Responsibility Areas (SRAs) or lands classified as VHFSZ. Implementation of **MM WF-1: Construction Coordination with Emergency and Fire Services** would require that the relevant emergency response services are consulted prior to construction and are able to identify necessary measures to prevent the impairment of emergency response, thereby reducing the potential impacts during construction. However, the possibility remains that consulting emergency service agencies would not result in measures capable of reducing impacts to less than significant when projects are sited in or near SRAs or lands classified as VHFSZ. Therefore, impacts from construction would remain potentially significant and unavoidable within these areas.

Impact 20(b). Due to slope, prevailing winds, and other factors, implementation of the Plan could exacerbate wildfire risks, and thereby expose project occupants to pollutant concentrations from a wildfire or the uncontrolled spread of wildfire (All Plan components; Construction and Operation). Due to the programmatic nature of Plan, the location and design of future projects cannot be determined at this time. However, it can reasonably be assumed that staging areas and construction zones for greenway paths, greenway amenities, pocket parks and greenspaces, safe crossings, and stormwater management facilities could occur on the District ROW and adjacent parcels where they fall within or near SRAs or lands classified as VHFSZ. Construction activities, when at sites within a VHFSZ or in or near an SRA, would involve equipment that may exacerbate wildfire risk in these areas. Heat or sparks from construction equipment or vehicles or from the use of flammable materials have the potential to ignite nearby vegetation and start a fire. While existing regulations would address potential fire risks associated with construction, when these activities occur within a VHFHZ, the existing regulations may not adequately address the heightened risks. Further precautions may need to be taken, including **MM WF-2: Prepare a Construction Fire Protection Plan**. Future project sites could feature conditions that would present additional wildfire risk and construction in these areas could result in potentially significant impacts related to exacerbating wildfire risks of, and exposing project occupants to, direct or

indirect risk of injury, loss, or death due to wildfire. Therefore, impacts would be potentially significant and unavoidable in these areas.

Impact 20(c). Implementation of the Plan may result in development of project components located in or near state responsibility areas or lands classified as very high fire hazard severity zones. Plan components may require the installation or maintenance of associated infrastructure (such as roads, fuel breaks, emergency water sources, power lines or other utilities) that would exacerbate fire risk or that may result in temporary or ongoing impacts to the environment. (All Plan components; Construction and Operation). Greenway paths and other Plan components may require extension of or construction of new utilities, such as water, electric, and sewer infrastructure such as mains, distribution pipes, as well as relocation of existing utilities on sites that are within or adjacent to VHFHSZ areas since the location and design of future projects are currently unknown. While major utility upgrades would not be anticipated, if any upgrades are made within VHFHSZs, these extensions (especially electrical), could exacerbate wildfire risk due to the high fire ignition potential of electricity and the highly flammable nature of materials used during construction. The construction of and installation of overhead or underground electric utilities may temporarily increase the risk of ignition of materials due to the high fire risk of electricity. **MM WF-2: Prepare a Construction Fire Protection Plan** would be implemented to reduce the risk of fire during construction. Nonetheless, construction or extension of utilities associated with Plan projects would have the potential to exacerbate the existing wildfire risk if they are located in VHFHSZs.

Operation of greenway paths and other Plan components in or adjacent to VHFHSZs would require implementation of measures to protect defensible space surrounding the property such as routine vegetation clearing or additional sprinkler systems to reduce the potential for fire ignition and spread. These protective measures as well as those described in **MM WF-3: Operations Fire Prevention Measures** are intended to reduce the risk of wildfire; however, the locations of future Plan projects are unknown and there remains potential that operation and maintenance of fire breaks, utilities (especially electric), or other infrastructure could result in a potentially significant impact.

Impact 20(d) Implementation of the plan may result in development of project components near state responsibility areas or lands classified as very high fire hazard severity zones, the project may expose people or structures to significant risks, including downslope or downstream flooding or landslides, as a result of runoff, post-fire slope instability, or drainage changes. (All Plan components; Construction and Operation). Due to the programmatic nature of Plan, the location and design of future projects cannot be determined at this time. However, it can reasonably be assumed that staging areas and construction zones for greenway paths, greenway amenities, pocket parks and greenspaces, safe crossings, and stormwater management facilities could occur on the District ROW and adjacent parcels where they fall within or near SRAs or lands classified as VHFSZ. Wildfires could exacerbate conditions of slope instability or flood because wildfires destroy vegetation and change soil conditions, which could expose people or structures to post-fire hazards regardless of whether flood or geologic hazards are addressed during project design. Because locations of specific project sites are not known at this time, construction of projects located in VHFHSZs or that have recently involved wildfires combined with areas prone to landslides or slope instability could expose workers, structures, and property to significant risks related to post-fire conditions. Impacts would be potentially significant. MM WF-2: Prepare a Construction Fire Protection Plan would ensure that project proponents plan for these potentialities by compiling a post-fire risk reduction measures into the construction fire prevention plan. The operation of Plan

components would likely introduce an increased number of daily visitors to project sites and expose those people as well as staff and structures to an area highly susceptible to landslides or slope instabilities after a wildfire event. Therefore, operating a new project under the Plan in these areas could exacerbate the existing risk of post-fire hazard by exposing additional people to this existing hazard. Implementation of MM WF-2: Construction Fire Prevention Plan would allow project proponents to prepare for the possibility, however, impacts would remain potentially significant.

SECTION 3 Findings

The County finds and determines that it has considered the identified means of lessening or avoiding the Project's significant effects and that to the extent any significant direct or indirect environmental effect, including cumulative project impacts, remain unavoidable or not reduced to below a level of significance after mitigation, when considered in light of the social, legal, economic, environmental, technological, and other project benefits discussed below, that such benefits override, outweigh, and make "acceptable" any such remaining significant and unavoidable environmental impacts of the project (CEQA Guidelines Section 15092(b)).

Specifically, the following benefits and considerations outweigh the identified significant and unavoidable adverse environmental impacts:

1. Implementation of the proposed Project would provide hundreds of acres of publicly accessible open space in some of the County's most park-poor communities.
2. Implementation of the proposed Project would provide jobs and training for local communities.
3. Implementation of the proposed Project would provide opportunities for active transportation, reducing VMT and carbon emissions.
4. Implementation of the proposed Project would assist with wayfinding in the SGV.
5. Implementation of the proposed Project would promote and be consistent with the County of Los Angeles 2014 Low Impact Development Standards Manual.
6. Implementation of the proposed Project would promote and be consistent with the County of Los Angeles OurCounty Sustainability Plan.
7. Implementation of the proposed Project would promote species biodiversity through the use of native plant communities in the *Design Guidelines and Standards*.
8. Implementation of the proposed Project would promote the establishment of habitat areas through the use of native plant communities in the *Design Guidelines and Standards*.

All of these benefits and considerations are based on the facts and substantial evidence set forth in the findings, the Final PEIR, and the record of proceedings for the proposed Project. Each of these benefits and considerations is a separate and independent basis that justifies approval of the proposed Project, so that if a court were to set aside the determination that any particular benefit or consideration would occur and justifies project approval, the County would otherwise stand by its determination that the remaining benefit(s) or considerations are sufficient to justify and substantiate project approval.

3.1 Alternatives

The CEQA Guidelines (Section 15126.6(a)-(f)) require an EIR to describe a reasonable range of feasible alternatives, including a No Project Alternative, and to analyze the impacts of the alternatives to allow for a comparative analysis of impacts for consideration by decision-makers. Specifically, CEQA requires consideration of a range of alternatives to the project or program that: (1) could feasibly attain most of

the basic program objectives and (2) would avoid or substantially lessen any of the significant impacts of the program. Under CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.6, the alternatives to be discussed in detail in an EIR should be able to "feasibly attain most of the basic objectives of the project." For this reason, the objectives described in Section 1.1.1 of the PEIR, provide the framework for defining possible alternatives. In addition to the No Project Alternative, the PEIR considered a reasonable range of alternatives that could reduce or eliminate the significant adverse environmental impacts associated with the proposed Project, while accomplishing most of the project objectives.

PRC Section 21002 provides that "public agencies should not approve projects as proposed if there are feasible alternatives or feasible mitigation measures available which would substantially lessen the significant environmental effects of such projects[.]" PRC Section 21002 also states that the procedures required by CEQA "are intended to assist public agencies in systematically identifying both the significant effects of projects and the feasible alternatives or feasible mitigation measures which will avoid or substantially lessen such significant effects."

Where a lead agency has determined that, even after the adoption of all feasible mitigation measures, a project as proposed will still cause one or more significant environmental effects that cannot be substantially lessened or avoided, the agency, prior to approving the project as mitigated, must first determine whether, with respect to such impacts, there remain any project alternatives that are both environmentally superior and feasible within the meaning of CEQA. Although an EIR must evaluate this range of potentially feasible alternatives, an alternative may ultimately be deemed by the lead agency to be "infeasible" if it fails to fully promote the lead agency's underlying goals and objectives with respect to the project. As the Court of Appeal explained in *City of Del Mar v. City of San Diego* (1982) 133 Cal.App.3d 410, 417, "'feasibility' under CEQA encompasses 'desirability' to the extent that desirability is based on a reasonable balancing of the relevant economic, environmental, social, and technological factors." (See also *California Native Plant Society v. City of Santa Cruz* (2009) 177 Cal. App. 4th 957, 1001.) Thus, even if a project alternative will avoid or substantially lessen any of the significant environmental effects of the project, the decisionmakers may reject the alternative if they determine that specific considerations make the alternative infeasible.

The alternatives considered in the PEIR are described below.

3.1.1 Alternative 1 – Reduced Plan Area Alternative

Under this Alternative, the Plan Area would be restricted to the District ROW, and no project components would be constructed or operated on parcels adjacent to or outside of the District ROW. Implementation of this alternative would continue to meet all of the project objectives described above. However, components such as pocket parks and greenspaces and safe crossings would commonly be located in adjacent parcels outside of the District ROW, and without those areas, project opportunities would be limited and implementation of this alternative may not fully meet the overall goal of the Plan to expand the active transportation network in the SGV or the objective of enhancing connectivity to schools, parks, transit, jobs, and other local points of interest. Additionally, without safe crossings, the network may not be fully connected and would include trails that start and stop along the District ROW.

As all projects implemented under the Plan would follow the *Design Guidelines and Standards*, implementation of this alternative would minimize or avoid the potential for significant and unavoidable

land use conflicts that could occur if components were built on adjacent parcels under the jurisdiction of local municipalities. In addition, the potential for adverse impacts to cultural resources, tribal cultural resources, and biological resources during construction of individual projects implemented under this Alternative would be somewhat reduced due to the decreased footprint of disturbance.

3.1.2 Reduced Components Alternative

Under this Alternative 2, the Plan would be revised to include only greenway paths and amenities and safe crossings. The Plan Area would remain the same. The Plan components not included in this alternative are pocket parks and additional stormwater measures beyond those required by the *Design Guidelines and Standards*.

Alternative 2 would meet the overall goal of the Plan to expand the active transportation network throughout the SGV, enhancing connectivity, increasing recreational opportunities, promoting equitable practices, and enriching community well-being. Since stormwater BMPs are required to treat a site's stormwater quality design volume where new infrastructure is proposed, Alternative 2 would still meet the objective of integrating stormwater management, but to a lesser degree than the Plan. However, this alternative would not meet the objective of enhancing natural habitats, as pocket parks and greenspaces provide an opportunity to enhance natural habitats and increase vegetated areas.

Focusing the Plan on greenway paths, associated amenities and safe crossings would reduce the disturbed area to discover cultural resources and tribal cultural resources and/or impact biological resources during construction, as project opportunities outside of the District ROW on adjacent parcels would be limited to safe crossings that have a much smaller area of disturbance than a pocket park or greenspace. Therefore, overall construction activity and ground disturbance would be minimized. It would also potentially reduce significant and unavoidable impacts related to increases in ambient noise levels, as recreationalists along the greenway path would be constantly moving through the network, whereas recreationalists at pocket parks and greenspaces are more likely to remain for a longer duration of time and enjoy active play at the park.

3.1.3 No Project Alternative

Under this Alternative, the Plan would not be implemented.

Development of bicycle paths and stormwater improvements along the District ROW in the SGV could continue via individual projects implemented by the County in accordance with the 2012 Bicycle Master Plan and 2015 Los Angeles County Enhanced Watershed Management Plan. The No Project Alternative assumes that it is reasonably foreseeable that individual municipalities within the Plan Area would continue to develop and implement individual recreational improvement projects within their cities on a project-by-project basis.

Individual projects would not have the same requirements for compliance with the *Design Guidelines and Standards*, which have been developed to ensure that projects developed under the Plan are energy and water efficient, manage stormwater runoff, and develop a consistent aesthetic along the entire length of the Greenway Network. Projects developed under the No Project Alternative could consist of much larger projects than described in the Plan, which could result in greater intensity and duration of construction activity. Therefore, full implementation of either plan, and associated goals and anticipated

benefits such as improved air quality, reduced flooding and increased groundwater recharge, as well as increased recreational opportunities, may or may not be realized.

3.1.4 Finding

The County finds the alternatives analysis is sufficient to inform the County and the public regarding the tradeoffs between the degree to which the alternatives could reduce environmental impacts and the corresponding degree to which the alternatives could achieve the project objectives. Based upon a full evaluation of the alternatives, and the entirety of the record, the County finds that adoption and implementation of the Project/Plan is the most desirable, feasible, and appropriate action for achieving the objectives of the project, and the County rejects the other alternatives because they do not achieve the substantial benefits of the Project based on consideration of the relevant factors identified in the PEIR, and listed above.

SECTION 4 Facts

The County makes this statement of overriding considerations in accordance with State CEQA Guidelines Section 15093 in support of approval of the Project. Specifically, in the County's judgment, the benefits of the Project, as proposed, outweigh the significant and unavoidable impacts, and the Project should be approved. The following provides the Project benefits:

1. Implementation of the proposed Project would provide hundreds of acres of publicly accessible open space in some of the County's most park-poor communities.
2. Implementation of the proposed Project would provide jobs and training for local communities.
3. Implementation of the proposed Project would provide opportunities for active transportation, reducing VMT and carbon emissions.
4. Implementation of the proposed Project would assist with wayfinding in the SGV.
5. Implementation of the proposed Project would promote and be consistent with the County of Los Angeles 2014 Low Impact Development Standards Manual.
6. Implementation of the proposed Project would promote and be consistent with the County of Los Angeles OurCounty Sustainability Plan.
7. Implementation of the proposed Project would promote species biodiversity through the use of native plant communities in the *Design Guidelines and Standards*.
8. Implementation of the proposed Project would promote the establishment of habitat areas through the use of native plant communities in the *Design Guidelines and Standards*.

Having considered the benefits outlined above, the County finds that each individual benefit set forth above constitutes an overriding consideration warranting approval of the Project, independent of the other benefits, despite each and every significant and unavoidable impact. The County determines that the significant and unavoidable environmental impacts of the Project are "acceptable" if any one of these benefits will be realized. Each of these benefits is based on substantial evidence set forth in the CEQA Findings, the PEIR, and/or the record of proceedings for the Project.