

3.5 LAND USE AND PLANNING, COMMUNITIES AND NEIGHBORHOODS, PROPERTY AND ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

This section evaluates potential land use and community effects related to the proposed alternatives and includes an assessment of potential environmental justice effects.

3.5.1 REGULATORY REQUIREMENTS

Federal

United States Army National Guard

An approximately 7.5 mile long portion of the existing Coast Corridor railroad travels through Camp Roberts, a US Army training facility. Within Camp Roberts, the Army leases the railroad right of way to the Union Pacific Railroad (UPRR). Easements through this and other Army National Guard properties are regulated under 10 USC 2668.¹

Los Padres National Forest

About 2 miles of the existing Coast Corridor railroad traverses the Los Padres National Forest near the Cuesta Grade north of the City of San Luis Obispo. The existing railroad travels through privately held land within the boundaries of the National Forest. The Los Padres National Forest, like other national forests, includes a mix of public and privately held properties within its boundaries.

Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Policies Act

The Uniform Act was enacted by Congress to ensure that owners of real property that is acquired for federal and federally-assisted projects and persons displaced as a direct result of such projects are treated fairly, consistently, and equitably.² In the event any of the proposed improvements use federal assistance towards property acquisition, adherence to the Uniform Act is required.

¹ Gardner, Orlando. Realty Officer. Army Corps of Engineers. March 13, 2013 - phone communication.

² 42 U.S.C. 4601 et seq.

To comply with the Uniform Act and its implementing regulations, all property owners and any persons displaced by a federally funded project must be informed in writing of their status and eligibility for any payments or assistance. Such payments and assistance may include, but are not necessarily limited to, the following:

- Just compensation for property acquired, whether in fee, easement, or other form of property rights acquisition. Just compensation will be established by an approved appraisal of fair market value or other processes defined in the Uniform Act and the regulations.
- An opportunity for the property owner to accompany the appraiser during inspection of the property.
- Eligible closing costs and other expenses related to the transfer of property.
- Assistance in finding and relocating to replacement property.
- Eligible expenses for moving personal property to a replacement site.
- Replacement housing payments and related expenses for displaced residential owners and tenants.
- Business reestablishment payments to small business and other defined eligible entities.
- Written notice informing property owners and displaced persons of their rights and eligibility for assistance.
- A notice that no one will be required to move from the acquired property from which they are being displaced for a minimum of 90 days.

Executive Order No. 12898

Executive Order No. 12898 requires all federal agencies to identify and address, as appropriate, any disproportionately high adverse human health and environmental effects of their programs, policies, and activities, on minority populations and low-income populations in the United States.³

In summary, the Order directs Federal agencies to conform to existing laws such that their actions:

³ Executive Order No. 12898, 1994

- Do not discriminate on the basis of race, color, or national origin;
- Identify and address disproportionately high and adverse health or environmental effects of their actions on minority and low-income populations;
- Provide opportunities for community input in the NEPA process, including input on potential effects and mitigation measures.

United States Department of Transportation (DOT) Order 5610.2 (2012) on environmental justice has defined “disproportionately high and adverse effect on minority and low-income populations” to mean an adverse effect that is predominately borne by a minority population and/or a low-income population, or will be suffered by the minority population and/or low-income population and is appreciably more severe or greater in magnitude than the adverse effect that will be suffered by the non-minority population and/or non-low-income population.⁴ According to Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ), agencies are required to make diligent efforts to involve the public throughout the NEPA process and the participation of low-income, minority, and tribal populations are necessary. Therefore, adequate outreach to these communities may require adaptive or innovative approaches to overcome potential linguistic, cultural, economic barriers that would affect their participation.

Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964

Under Title VI, each Federal agency is required to ensure that no person, on the ground of race, color, or national origin, is excluded from participation in, denied the benefits of, or subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance.

State

California Department of Fish and Wildlife

The existing railroad is immediately adjacent to the Big Sandy Wildlife Area, a nature reserve along the Salinas River under the jurisdiction of the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW). CDFW has no local area land use plan for Big Sandy Wildlife Area.⁵ Title 14, Section 550 of the California Code of Regulations grants the Regional Manager the authority to regulate public use of designated State wildlife areas. The southern portion of Big Sandy Wildlife Area is coterminous with a section of the Camp Roberts Military Reservation.

⁴ DOT Order 5610.2, Appendix Definitions, subd.[g]

⁵ Personal Communication with Bob Stafford on March 8, 2013.

Local

Local agencies with land use jurisdiction in the study area are the counties of Monterey and San Luis Obispo, and the cities of Salinas, Soledad, King, Paso Robles, and Atascadero. The existing rail alignment also traverses the incorporated City of Gonzales, but no new facilities outside the railroad right-of-way are proposed there.

Monterey County General Plan

The Monterey County General Plan Land Use and Circulation Elements establish policies to guide the maintenance and expansion of rail service in the county. The plan protects the potential for future rail transportation and supporting facilities in major industrial and commercial centers. The plan includes a general framework to encourage growth within or near incorporated cities and designated community areas where existing services are available. Transit-oriented development around existing and future transportation infrastructure is also encouraged.⁶

City of Salinas General Plan

The Circulation Element of the City of Salinas General Plan directs the city to work with Amtrak to provide commuter rail service to the Silicon Valley and other major destinations. The plan also includes specific policies to support maintenance and expanded use of the City's Intermodal Transportation Center, the local Coast Corridor stop. The plan contains broad policies and programs to support an integrated transportation network and supportive land use.

City of Soledad

The City of Soledad General Plan includes a goal to establish a train station in the downtown area. The General Plan includes additional goals and policies to promote residential and commercial development in close proximity to the station to make transit use a convenient and viable alternative transportation mode.

The General Plan's goal for a station was furthered through the City's adoption of a Downtown Specific Plan, which calls for the development of an Intermodal Transit Station around where the existing railroad travels through Soledad. The Specific Plan includes a schematic diagram for the station area, including passenger platforms, parking, and ticket kiosks. Prior to adopting the Specific Plan, the City certified an accompanying EIR that examined program-level effects of the proposed station as part of a larger program of land use and transportation changes in the downtown area.

⁶ County of Monterey, 2007, Circulation Element

City of King General Plan

King City has adopted several documents that contain plans and policies supporting a downtown passenger rail station along the existing railroad tracks that traverse the city. The Historic Corridor Revitalization Plan includes plans for public investment and development in the area surrounding the proposed station. The rail stop is identified as an important part of the revitalization effort, serving commuters, tourists, and downtown businesses.

Further, the First Street Corridor Master Plan includes conceptual station design plans. The plan shows a layout of platforms, parking, and intermodal connection points.

San Luis Obispo County General Plan

The San Luis Obispo General Plan Circulation Element identifies the current rail station in San Luis Obispo as an important component of the regional transportation network. The plan calls for coordination between different modes of transportation to reinforce federal, state, regional, and local agency goals.

City of El Paso de Robles (Paso Robles) General Plan

The Paso Robles General Plan promotes regional, interstate, and intrastate rail service through a broad range of action items, including support of expanding Amtrak rail service, and improvements to existing railroad crossings.⁷ Paso Robles has also adopted policies and action items to retain the rural, open space, and agricultural areas surrounding the city. The city intends that its designation of a “Purple Belt” (wine grape belt) will preserve agriculture and open space and limit the conversion of lands from viticultural to urban uses.⁸

City of Atascadero General Plan

The City of Atascadero General Plan recommends improving passenger service on the Coast Starlight. The Plan also identifies opportunities to replace existing at-grade crossings with grade separation structures.^{9,10}

⁷ City of El Paso de Robles, 2011, Circulation Element

⁸ City of El Paso de Robles, 2003, Open Space Element

⁹ City of Atascadero, 2002, p. III-5

¹⁰ The Coast Corridor project does not propose any changes to the crossings in Atascadero. The project presumes leaving these crossing intact. This decision does not, however, preclude the City from proceeding with new grade separations in conjunction with Union Pacific.

City of San Luis Obispo General Plan

The General Plan for the City of San Luis Obispo includes plans to develop tourism services around the existing train station.¹¹ The plan further stipulates that residential areas should be separated or screened from the railroad right-of-way.¹²

3.5.2 METHODS OF EVALUATION

In this analysis, a land use impact was considered significant on the basis of compatibility with applicable local land use plans, policies, and regulations adopted for the purpose of avoiding or mitigating an environmental impact. Proposed improvements were considered significant if determined to conflict with any applicable habitat conservation plan or natural community conservation plan. Additionally, impacts were evaluated for their potential to physically divide an established community.

Study Areas

Land Use

The land use study area includes the existing railroad right-of-way as well as surrounding “buffer areas” whose sizes are based on the type of proposed improvement. The study area distances account for the amount of land that would potentially be directly and indirectly disturbed based on the anticipated severity of the construction associated with different types of improvements.

- **Curve Realignments:** The study area was comprised of 100 feet on either side of proposed realignments for permanent impact areas and 200 feet on either side of the proposed alignment for temporary impact areas.
- **Siding Extensions and New Siding:** The study area was comprised of the existing railroad right-of-way for permanent impact areas and 50 feet on either side of the proposed alignment for temporary impact areas.
- **Second Mainline:** The study area was comprised of the existing railroad right-of-way for permanent impact areas and 100 feet on either side of the right-of-way for the proposed second mainline.

¹¹ City of San Luis Obispo, 2010, p. 1-43

¹² City of San Luis, 2010, p. 1-29

- **Stations:** The proposed station impact area is the permanent station footprint within the community. Accordingly, these stations footprints are the same as the station footprints assessed within these local jurisdiction's planning documents.

To assess potential property acquisition requirements, the study area is 100 feet on either side of the alignment centerlines. The study area is intended represent such properties requiring partial or full acquisitions. The study area includes portions of several communities and neighborhoods, as discussed further in **Subsection 3.5.4, Environmental Consequences**.

Environmental Justice

For environmental justice impacts, the study area extends to 1 mile on either side of the centerline of proposed alignment changes and 1 mile from the two proposed new station areas. The breadth of the environmental justice study area provides a conservative estimate of the extent to which the Build Alternative might result in disproportionately high or adverse effects on minority and/or low income populations.

The analysis was conducted using existing U.S. Census 2010 tract and block group data compiled in a geographic information systems (GIS) format. Additionally, aerial photos, field observations, review of local general plans or regional plans, and informal consultation with local planning agencies on current and planned land uses all informed this analysis.

Land Use Compatibility

Land use compatibility was determined by comparing the proposed physical improvements with existing land uses. Accordingly, each type of land use was assigned a compatibility rating of low, medium, or high based on the sensitivity of the existing land use within the proposed improvement areas. For this program-level review, compatibility determinations were based on general plan land use designations.¹³

Table 3.5-1 summarizes the potential compatibility rating of the proposed physical improvements with existing land use. A proposed improvement was considered *highly compatible* if it would be located in areas planned for transportation multi-modal centers or corridor development, redevelopment, economic revitalization,

¹³ In some instances, local general plans do not designate the existing railroad right-of-way as a transportation use, but rather as whatever the adjacent land use may be. Accordingly, potential effects to various land use categories may be overstated

transit-oriented development, or high-intensity employment uses. A proposed improvement would have *medium* compatibility if it would require the conversion of land intended for multi-family residential, schools, low-intensity industrial, and hospital uses. Compatibility would be considered *low* if an alternative would be potentially inconsistent with local or regional planning documents. As the table indicates, some land use types can result in varying degrees of compatibility depending on context. Agriculture is one such use; it is also the predominant land use throughout the entirety of the corridor. High compatibility is assumed for improvements traveling along agricultural lands, but low compatibility is assumed if an improvement requires the conversion of existing agricultural lands to transportation use. As further discussed in **Section 3.7, Agricultural and Forest Resources**, farmland in both Monterey and San Luis Obispo counties is highly protected.

Table 3.5-1 Compatibility of Land Use Types

Low Compatibility	Medium Compatibility	High Compatibility
Single-family residential, community parks, neighborhood park, habitat conservation area, elementary/middle school (widened or new right-of-way needed), agricultural (when widened or new right-of-way needed)	Multifamily residential, high schools, low-intensity industrial, hospitals	Business park/regional commercial, multifamily residential, existing or planned transit center, high intensity industrial park, service commercial, commercial recreation, college, transportation/utilities, high-intensity government facilities, airport or train station, agricultural (no new right-of-way needed)

Source: Circlepoint, 2013

Property

The analysis assessed existing land uses located adjacent to each proposed alignment. Potential property acquisitions were determined based on the potential acreage that would be needed for a given physical improvement and whether the land use-type was particularly sensitive to change. Accordingly, **Table 3.5-2** ranks potential property acquisitions as high, medium, or low based on land use-type. Potential impacts include partial or full acquisition of properties, displacement and relocation of existing uses, or demolition of properties.

Table 3.5-2 Rankings of Potential Property Impacts

	Urban/ Suburban	Industrial	Agricultural	Open Space
Build Alternative Requirements				
No additional right-of-way required	Low	Low	Low	Low
Widening of existing right-of-way required	High	Medium	High	Medium
New corridor (new right-of-way required)	High	High	High	High

Source: Circlepoint, 2013

To identify potential property acquisitions, land uses in the study area were characterized by type and cross-referenced against aerial maps to determine potential direct impact to structures.

In **Table 3-5.3** below, property acquisitions are assessed as a percentage of private property that would need to be acquired to complete each improvement. This calculation considers the acreage of private land that would be required for construction as a percentage of the total acreage required for construction.

Communities and Neighborhoods

This section also considers potential impacts on communities and neighborhoods. A potential impact to communities and neighborhoods was identified if one of the proposed improvements would divide an established residential community where no division exists under current conditions, potentially causing a physical disruption to community cohesion. For the most part, improvements to existing transportation corridors would not create substantial new community barriers.

Environmental Justice

Environmental justice impacts were determined by comparing the minority and low-income populations of the study area to the demographics of the nearby cities and counties. U.S. Census data was reviewed to determine if such minority or low-income populations existed within or near the study area using the following thresholds.

Communities were considered to be minority or low income if they met at least one of the following criteria:

- Whether at least 50 percent of the population in the study area may be minority or 25 percent of the population in the study area is low-income;
- Whether the percentage of minority or low-income population in the study area may be at least 10 percent greater than the average generally in the county or community.

After environmental justice communities were identified, the analysis determined whether the proposed improvements would occur within or adjacent to an existing transportation right-of-way or require a new alignment potentially encroaching into an environmental justice community.¹⁴

The assessment of potential impacts on minority and low-income populations took into consideration the size and type of right-of-way acquisition that would be necessary for the improvements. For example, if the proposed alignment would be within an existing right-of-way, the potential for impacts would be lower than if the alignment would require a new right-of-way acquisition.

Nearly all of the proposed improvements evaluated under the Build Alternative would be located within or adjacent to existing transportation corridors, largely (but not fully) reducing the potential for significant adverse impacts generally. This analysis considers the Build Alternative on a corridor-wide basis.

3.5.3 AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

A spectrum of different land uses line the corridor. Agricultural uses are predominant along the length of the corridor from Salinas to San Luis Obispo, but urban and suburban uses are present near city centers. Additional information about the location and character of these uses, as well as information about property ownership, communities and neighborhoods, and environmental justice are provided below.

¹⁴ Census *tract* data are used here as a reasonable, best-available proxy for the analysis of impacts to low-income populations, since as of September 2013, block group level data is not available. Block group data for minority populations is available, and is used in this document.

Existing Land Uses

Urban/Suburban

Urban/suburban uses can include residential, commercial, and recreational uses and are generally concentrated near the cities of San Luis Obispo and Salinas. Smaller towns such as Gonzales, Soledad, King City, Paso Robles, and Atascadero also support urban uses along the corridor.

Agricultural

Between developed areas, agricultural uses predominate. Agricultural areas are most common in the Salinas Valley and inland Central Coast region. **Section 3.7, Agricultural and Forest Resources**, includes information about the agricultural character of the study areas.

Industrial/Public Facilities

Industrial areas border several portions of the right-of-way, comprising large tracts near agricultural processing facilities, energy production plants and other facilities. In the study area, industrial uses are largely located on the outskirts of urban areas. The existing railroad traverses the San Ardo oil and gas field at which occurs drilling and processing of crude oil and raw gas products. Public facilities include Camp Roberts, an Army National Guard post located north of San Miguel, and state prisons in Soledad and near San Luis Obispo.

Open Spaces/Rural Lands

Open space areas are present in urban and non-urban contexts throughout the corridor. Big Sandy Wildlife Reserve and Los Padres National Forest are two of the largest open space areas adjacent to the corridor; both are located in Monterey County. Rural lands are also prevalent in non-urban portions of the project corridor. Rural lands can include any other non-developed land not in agricultural use.

Property

The railroad right-of-way itself is owned by the Union Pacific Railroad. The majority of study properties outside the right-of-way are privately owned. One exception is the McKay/Wellsona Curve Realignment, where the proposed realignment includes portions of Big Sandy Wildlife Area and Camp Roberts.¹⁵ Portions of other improvements would also cross public roads in some locations.

Communities and Neighborhoods

The existing rail alignment traverses several existing communities. The study area includes the following incorporated cities: Salinas, Gonzales, Soledad, King City, Paso Robles, Atascadero, and San Luis Obispo. Several unincorporated communities are in the study areas, as well. These include: Chualar, San Lucas, San Ardo, Bradley, San Miguel, Templeton, and Santa Margarita.

The railroad runs parallel to the freeway that skirts the downtown or central district of many of these communities. Communities where the railway does not intersect the downtown area include: Chualar, Gonzales, San Lucas, San Ardo, Bradley, San Miguel, Templeton, and Atascadero. In other communities, the railroad goes through or near the downtown area. These communities include: Salinas, Soledad, King City, Paso Robles, Santa Margarita and San Luis Obispo.

There are also long stretches of the existing alignment where the railway passes by open space and low-density residential areas. These are not neighborhoods in the same sense as the communities identified above, however, communities may form around residential areas.

Environmental Justice

Communities for which environmental justice considerations are relevant were identified throughout the corridor. As shown in **Figure 3.5-1**, low-income environmental justice communities were identified throughout the corridor, particularly in urban areas in and outside of San Luis Obispo, near King City, and in and outside of Salinas. The majority of the study area within Monterey County includes minority environmental justice communities. In San Luis Obispo County, demographic data indicates a smaller number of minority environmental justice communities.

¹⁵ Study area lands along the proposed second mainline in the Los Padres National Forest are privately held.

Along the entirety of the project corridor, about 46 percent of study area census block groups have minority environmental justice communities. About 14 percent of census tracts within the study area have populations of people living below the poverty line and are thus low-income environmental justice communities.

3.5.4 ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

No Build Alternative

The No Build Alternative represents the continuation of existing passenger service, with some expansion of freight rail traffic. However, the No Build Alternative does not include expansion of existing physical components between Salinas and San Luis Obispo, with the exception of Positive Train Control (PTC) upgrades. Such PTC signal upgrades would occur as part of the No Build Alternative. The PTC improvements would be located immediately adjacent to the railroad tracks, within the right-of-way, and would not disrupt existing land uses.

Under the No Build Alternative, it is generally assumed, based on local planning documents, between today and 2040, there would be no substantial changes in allowable land uses or to communities in the study area. Moderate changes in land use could be expected in urban areas along the right-of-way as a result of growth in population, transportation improvement projects, and other economic changes in the Coast Corridor region. Additionally, some agricultural lands are anticipated to be converted to urban uses, particularly those in proximity to existing communities. However, most of the local cities have selectively focused future growth away from important agricultural lands. This is particularly true in Monterey County, which has adopted strong farmland protection policies, as well as in the Paso Robles viticultural region. However, the No Build Alternative would result in little perceptible land use change, and no substantial change or effect on land use, property ownership, communities, or environmental justice communities.

Build Alternative

Land Use

Construction-Period Effects

Generally, construction of any of the proposed physical improvements that would be placed within the existing railroad tracks or existing railroad right-of-way (rail and track upgrades, signal upgrades, and powered switches) would result in little or no conflict with adjacent or nearby land uses or property, as all such work would occur within or immediately adjacent to the existing railroad.

Certain other proposed physical improvements, such as curve realignments and new or extended sidings may in some cases diverge substantially from the existing railroad right of way. Construction (and as described further below, operation) of such improvements would likely require staging areas on adjacent lands that may be in non-transportation related uses. Such uses would be temporary, lasting for the duration of construction, after which any land use incompatibility would be alleviated.

During construction, temporary land use impacts could include road closures and traffic detours, which could in turn disrupt access to public facilities, emergency vehicle access, and pose potential physical barriers to communities and business districts. However, these effects would be temporary in duration and upon completing construction, the affected areas could be restored to pre-construction conditions. Depending on the design of proposed improvements, disruptions in local access or temporary relocation of public facilities could occur, as discussed further in **Section 3.1, Traffic and Travel**.

Operational Effects

Land Use Compatibility and Property

Table 3.5-3 summarizes land use compatibility effects by implementation of the Build Alternative components. Property acquisitions would be direct effects of the proposed action; land use compatibility evaluates for potential indirect effects.

Certain Build Alternative components would be implemented within or immediately adjacent to the right-of-way (track and signal upgrades, powered switches), and would thus have high land use compatibility as they would complement the underlying transportation use.

Land use compatibility is also considered high for the two proposed stations, as the receiving cities of Soledad and King City have each adopted land use plans indicating conceptual station area plans consistent with the Build Alternative. Both cities also support of the proposed reinstitution of Coast Daylight service.

The proposed second mainline also has a generally high compatibility, as it would be located immediately adjacent to the existing transportation corridor, likely within the existing railroad right-of-way. To the extent the second mainline requires land outside the right-of-way, compatibility may be lower in areas that would traverse the Los Padres National Forest.

Land use compatibility is generally considered low for components requiring lands outside of the right-of-way. However, as noted in **Table 3.5-1**, the compatibility determination depends on the type of land proposed for conversion. Industrial or

transportation related properties would be considered compatible, whereas conversion of agricultural or residential lands would be considered highly incompatible.

All curve realignments, as well as several sidings and extensions would require acquisition of lands outside the existing railroad right-of-way and the conversion of such lands to railroad use. Acquisition of adjacent agricultural, residential, and open space lands would result in an incompatible land use. Particularly, the Harlem/Metz, Coburn, and MP 172 curve realignments would require acquisition of agricultural land adjacent to the Salinas River. As such, these curve realignments would have low land use compatibility.

Communities and Neighborhoods

Potential direct impacts to communities and neighborhoods could occur if a proposed physical improvement would divide an existing residential neighborhood where no division exists under existing conditions.

With few exceptions, the proposed physical improvements within the Build Alternative are within or immediately adjacent to the existing railroad right-of-way. The proposed train controls, track and rail upgrades, and power switches would all be placed within the existing railroad right-of-way and accordingly, would not have any substantial potential to create a new division or substantially exacerbate any existing divisions.

The proposed physical improvements that diverge from the existing railroad right-of-way (particularly curve realignments, new sidings, siding extensions, and the second mainline) are generally located in agricultural or open space areas or are otherwise outside of intensely developed neighborhoods and existing communities. However, as noted in **Table 3.5-3**, some of the curve realignments would require land currently in residential use, which could lead to an adverse effect within affected communities. The Wellsona/Paso Robles and Henry/Santa Margarita curve realignments in particular, are located in residential areas within San Luis Obispo County. As such, these curve realignments would likely require partial or full acquisition of some residential properties within established communities. However, the existing railroad already travels through these communities and thus would not create a new barrier that would separate neighborhoods.

Environmental Justice

Construction-Period Effects

Figure 3.5-2 depicts the environmental justice communities in proximity to proposed improvements. In general, the majority of environmental justice communities are located within Monterey County, particularly near proposed improvements such as the Harlem/Metz curve realignment, New Chalone Creek siding, Coburn Curve realignment, and King City siding. Environmental justice communities near such proposed improvements would potentially experience some of the noted construction effects.

It should be emphasized that the number, timing, and potential phasing of Build Alternative improvements is highly uncertain. Notwithstanding, construction of any of the individual Build Alternative improvements would produce noise levels higher than the ambient conditions, localized air quality effects, and changes to the visual character and quality of the surroundings. Depending on which elements of the Build Alternative are selected for further design and eventual construction, environmental justice effects could occur if the elements so selected were disproportionately located within identified environmental justice communities and elements discarded were outside such communities. Any further NEPA analysis that may be performed on selected improvements will need to further examine this potential for environmental justice effects.

At the programmatic, Tier 1 level, however, the Build Alternative improvements as a whole are widely distributed throughout the Salinas to San Luis Obispo corridor and accordingly, would not result in a concentration of construction related effects upon such communities.

Operational Effects

Similar to the discussion above for construction-related effects, there is considerable uncertainty as to which if any of the proposed improvements would become operational. Any further NEPA analysis that may be performed will need to consider if the range of selected improvements is disproportionately within environmental justice communities and if such a selection would constitute an environmental justice effect.

It should also be noted that the aspects of the Build Alternative offer potential benefits that would be shared broadly. The potential benefit of increased and improved service would have a direct benefit to all communities, including environmental-justice qualifying communities through minor improvements to regional air quality and traffic.

As shown in **Section 3.2, Air Quality and Greenhouse Gases**, the Build Alternative has modest potential to reduce air pollutants within the Central Coast region as a whole, which includes the environmental justice communities along the Coast Corridor between Salinas and San Luis Obispo. The Build Alternative would thus result in somewhat improved air quality effects for the area as a whole.

The analysis below describes the potential operational effects of various elements of the Build Alternative. The factors described would be important to carry forward in any future project-level NEPA review that may occur.

Existing Alignment: All ten segments of the existing alignment between Salinas and San Luis Obispo are located within one or more environmental justice communities. Once implemented, upgrades to existing tracks along the alignment would allow for trains to safely travel at faster speeds, which may result in moderate and intermittent increases in noise levels along the much of existing right-of-way. The greatest increase in operational noise would occur along segments #1, #2, #4, and #6 of the existing alignment.

New Sidings and Siding Extensions: Six out of seven proposed sidings/siding extensions would occur within minority environmental justice communities. However, half of these sidings near environmental justice communities would involve the extension of an existing siding (as opposed to construction of a new siding), and would therefore be expected to have a less substantial impact on the surrounding community. Localized air quality effects could occur in areas of new and/or extended sidings. In both such locations, trains may dwell for extended periods, resulting in pollution concentrations in specific areas. As a result, there is the potential for proposed siding improvements to have an impact on environmental justice communities, particularly if sidings were to increase idling, noise, and/or pollutant emissions in environmental justice communities.

New Stations: New stations proposed for Soledad and King City would both be constructed within a minority environmental justice community. The King City station area is within a low-income environmental justice community as well. If new stations are developed and Coast Daylight service created, new trains would travel relatively slowly through these communities. Stations introduce the potential that trains could dwell for extended periods in the respective communities, thereby introducing the possibility of localized air quality impacts. However, new stations would provide additional travel options for both Soledad and King City and could result in beneficial economic effects. If one or both stations seek federal funding for construction, potential effects to environmental justice communities would be assessed in future project-level environmental documentation, as described in **Subsection 3.5.5, Mitigation Strategies and Subsequent Analysis**.

Curve Realignments: Seven out of eight proposed curve realignments would occur within minority or low-income environmental justice communities, as identified in **Table 3.5-3**. Particularly high numbers of environmental justice communities are present near the Harlem/Metz curve realignment. Many of these proposed curve realignments involve multiple segments of rail proposed for realignment; some of these segments are not located near environmental justice communities. Notwithstanding, there is potential for the proposed curve realignments to have an impact on environmental justice communities because curve realignments would require land acquisition/conversion of lands to a transportation use. Curve realignments could potentially add noise and visual implications by realigning the tracks closer to residents.

As shown in **Section 3.3, Noise and Vibration**, potential noise effects are most likely to occur at the proposed Wellsona/Paso Robles, Templeton/Henry, and Henry/Santa Margarita curve realignments. The area surrounding the Wellsona/Paso Robles and Henry/Santa Margarita curve realignments include environmental justice communities. Areas near the Templeton/Henry curve realignment do not include environmental justice communities. Visual changes along the corridor are discussed in detail in **Section 3.6, Visual Resources**. Since the proposed improvements are primarily located along an existing railroad right-of-way, no fundamental changes are expected to occur in the visual character of the study area. However, curve realignments would likely occur outside the right-of-way if they are to substantially reduce the degree of existing track curvature.

Second Main Track: There are no environmental justice qualifying communities located near the proposed second main track. Therefore, neither construction nor operation of the second main track is expected to result in an impact to environmental justice communities.

Table 3.5-3 Potential Impacts to Land Use, Property, and Environmental Justice

Build Alternative Components	Land Use Compatibility	Percent of Private Land Potentially Necessary for Acquisition	Includes Minority Environmental Justice Communities?	Includes Low-Income Environmental Justice Communities?
Salinas Powered Switch	Within ROW: High	NA	NA	NA
<i>Upgrades to Existing Alignment Section #1</i>	<i>Within ROW: High</i>	<i>NA</i>	<i>Yes, 31 block groups</i>	<i>Yes, 5 tracts</i>
Spence Siding Extension	Agricultural: Low Industrial: Low	100%	Yes, 4 block groups	None
<i>Upgrades to Existing Alignment Section #2</i>	<i>Within ROW: High</i>	<i>NA</i>	<i>Yes, 15 block groups</i>	<i>Yes, 2 tracts</i>
Gonzales Powered Switch	Within ROW: High	NA	NA	N/A
Soledad Powered Switch	Within ROW: High	NA	NA	N/A
Soledad New Passenger Station	Commercial: High Public Facilities: High	100%	Yes, 6 block groups	None
Harlem/Metz Curve Realignments	Agricultural: Low Industrial: Low	100%	Yes, 3 block groups	None
Chalone Creek New Siding	Agricultural: Low Industrial: Low	100%	Yes, 2 block groups	None
<i>Upgrades to Existing Alignment Section #3</i>	<i>Within ROW: High</i>	<i>NA</i>	<i>Yes, 4 block groups</i>	<i>None</i>

Build Alternative Components	Land Use Compatibility	Percent of Private Land Potentially Necessary for Acquisition	Includes Minority Environmental Justice Communities?	Includes Low-Income Environmental Justice Communities?
Coburn Curve Realignments	Agricultural: Low	100%	Yes, 2 block groups	No
King City Siding Extension	Agricultural: Low Commercial: Low Industrial: Low Residential: Low	100%	Yes, 8 block groups	Yes, 1 tract
King City New Passenger Station	Commercial: High	100%	Yes, 8 block groups	Yes, 1 tract
King City Powered Switch	Within ROW: High	NA	N/A	N/A
Upgrades to Existing Alignment Section #4	Agricultural: High	NA	Yes, 5 block groups	Yes, 1 tract
MP 165 Curve Realignment	Agricultural: Low	100%	Yes, 2 block groups	No
San Lucas New Siding	Agricultural: Low Industrial: Low	100%	Yes, 3 block groups	No
Upgrades to Existing Alignment Section #5	Within ROW: High	NA	Yes, 3 block groups	No
MP 172 Track Realignment	Agricultural: Low	100%	Yes, 1 block group	No

Build Alternative Components	Land Use Compatibility	Percent of Private Land Potentially Necessary for Acquisition	Includes Minority Environmental Justice Communities?	Includes Low-Income Environmental Justice Communities?
San Ardo Powered Switch	Within ROW: High	NA	NA	N/A
Getty/Bradley Curve Realignments	Agricultural: Low	100%	Yes, 1 block group	No
Bradley Siding Extension	Agricultural: Low	100%	Yes, 1 block group	No
Bradley Powered Switch	Within ROW: High	NA	NA	NA
Upgrades to Existing Alignment Section #6	Within ROW: High	NA	Yes, 2 block groups	No
Upgrades to Existing Alignment Section #7	Within ROW: High	NA	Yes, 2 block groups	No
McKay/Wellsona Curve Realignments	Agricultural: Low Public facilities: Low	53.75%	Yes, 2 block groups	No
McKay East Powered Switches	Within ROW: High	NA	NA	NA
Wellsona New Siding	Residential: Low	100%	Yes, 1 block group	No
Upgrades to Existing Alignment Section #8	Within ROW: High	NA	Yes, 3 block groups	No
Wellsona/Paso Robles Curve Realignments	Agricultural: Low	100%	Yes, 1 block group	No
Templeton Siding Extension	Within ROW: High	98.96%	No	No

Build Alternative Components	Land Use Compatibility	Percent of Private Land Potentially Necessary for Acquisition	Includes Minority Environmental Justice Communities?	Includes Low-Income Environmental Justice Communities?
Templeton/Henry Curve Realignments	Recreation: Low	100%	No	No
<i>Upgrades to Existing Alignment Section #9</i>	<i>Within ROW: High</i>	<i>NA</i>	<i>Yes, 1 block group</i>	<i>Yes, 1 tract</i>
Henry/Santa Margarita Curve Realignment	Agricultural: Low Residential: Low	99.92%	Yes, 1 block group	Yes, 1 tract
Santa Margarita Powered Switch	Within ROW: High			
Cuesta Second Main Track	Within ROW: High	100%	No	No
<i>Upgrades to Existing Alignment Section #10</i>	<i>Within ROW: High</i>	<i>NA</i>	<i>Yes, 1 block group</i>	<i>Yes, 6 tracts</i>

Source: ICF, 2013

3.5.5 AVOIDANCE, MINIMIZATION, AND MITIGATION STRATEGIES

Land Use Compatibility and Property

Potential mitigation strategies to alleviate or minimize impacts to land use associated with the Build Alternative could include, but not be limited to, the following:

A-LU-1. As only schematic plans have been developed to date, the level of detailed design that would normally precede construction could avoid or minimize the potential for land use displacement and property acquisition, whether temporary and/or permanent, residential or non-residential.

A-LU-2. Design strategies could be implemented to avoid or minimize the temporary or permanent acquisition of properties to the extent feasible.

MM-LU-3. In addition, to the extent displacement of any residence or business occurs, relocation assistance procedures in accordance with the Federal Uniform Relocation and Real Property Acquisition Policies Act of 1970 would be implemented.

Communities and Neighborhoods

Although this document found few community/neighborhood effects resulting from the Build Alternative, some of the specific elements of the Build Alternative may result in property acquisitions that could adversely affect communities and neighborhoods along the existing railroad. While one at-grade crossing would be created as part of the Build Alternative curve realignment at MP 172, the crossing is not located within a populated neighborhood that would reduce community interactions from existing conditions.

MIN-LU-4. Efforts could be made during design to minimize any barriers to community and neighborhood interaction.

MIN-LU-5. Consultation with local governments and planning agencies throughout the design effort could be conducted in order to maintain or enhance neighborhood integrity.

MIN-LU-6. If the MP 172 curve realignment is constructed and includes a new at-grade crossing at Cattlemen Road, potential strategies to reduce community effects could include additional grade separation of rail lines and streets, new pedestrian

crossings, new cross-connection points, improved visual quality of project facilities, and traffic management plans that maintain access during and after construction.

MIN-LU-7. Temporary construction-related impacts on neighborhoods and communities could be addressed through site-specific measures. Potential strategies to alleviate or minimize impact to community during construction may include, but would not be limited to, the following:

- Provide opportunities for community involvement early in future environmental studies;
- Facilitate design workshops within affected neighborhoods to learn from the community which circulation elements (automobile, bicycle, pedestrian) in the impacted area are most critical so that those elements can be preserved;
- Develop design standards for facilities, landscape, and public art associated with the project that reflect the character of adjacent affected neighborhoods;
- Ensure that key connections (pedestrian/bicycle and vehicular crossings) across the rail corridor are maintained where necessary to maintain neighborhood integrity;
- Complete a construction logistics analysis to determine approximate durations, impacts and localized mitigation measures to reduce disruption to communities, activities, traffic and circulation;
- Develop traffic management plans that reduce barriers during construction;
- Where feasible, maintain connectivity during construction;
- Implement measures to maintain high level of visual quality in the neighborhood. Such measures can include visual buffers, trees and other landscaping, architectural design and public artwork; and
- Implement procurement specifications and incentives for construction contractors designed to reduce the duration and disruption of construction. Potential requirements include restrictions on construction vehicle traffic and routes, haul routes, hours of permitted construction activity, and advance public notification of all closures or expected travel delays.

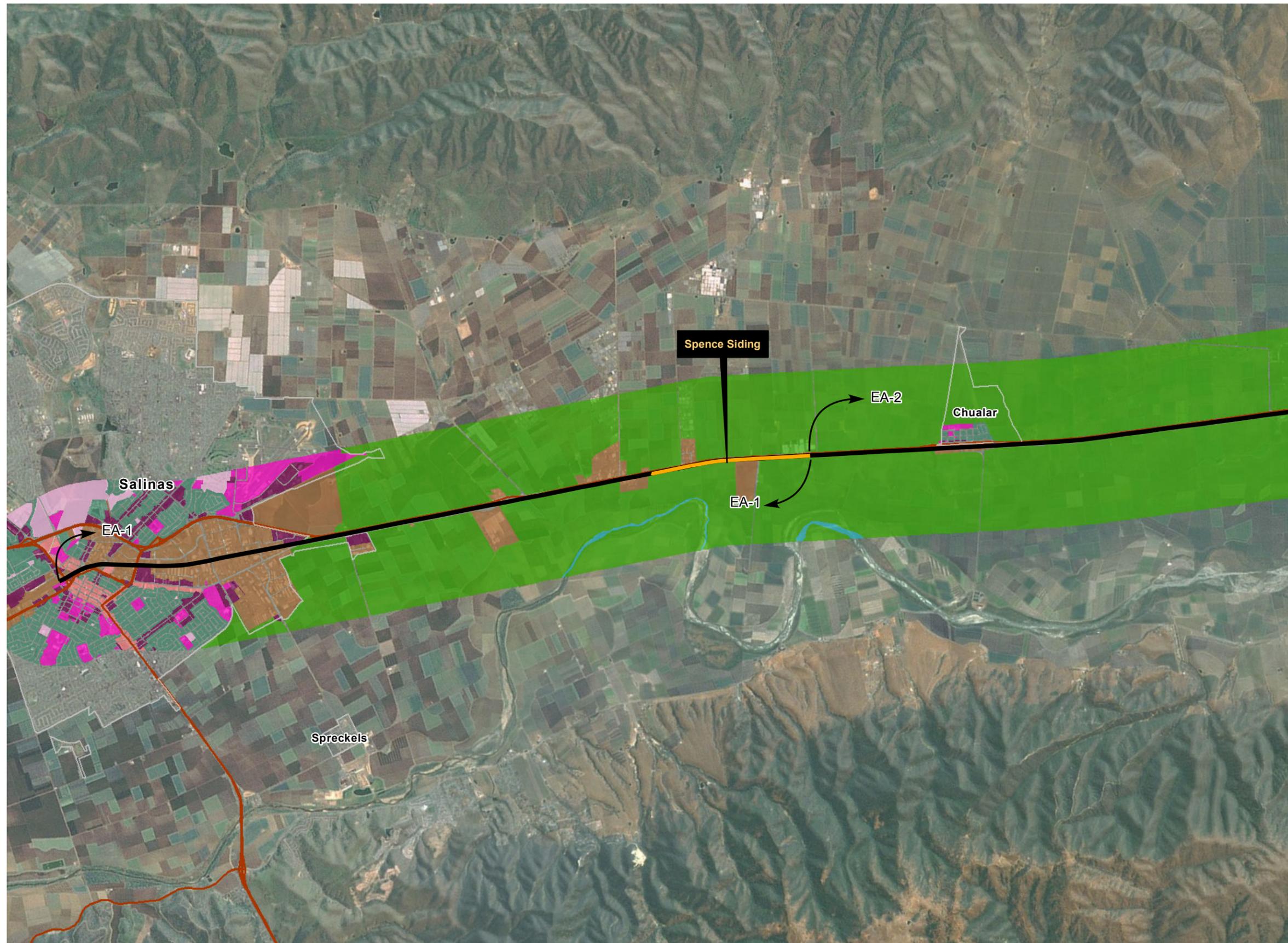
Environmental Justice

Potential strategies to avoid or minimize impacts to land use associated with the Build Alternative could include, but not be limited to, the following:

- **A-LU-8.** In selecting components of the Build Alternative to carry forward for design and potential construction and operation, examine whether the selected improvements are disproportionately located within environmental justice communities. Environmental justice effects could potentially be avoided if the improvements carried forward are not disproportionately located within environmental justice communities.
- **MIN-LU-9.** EO 12898 requires federal agencies to ensure effective public participation and access to information. Compliance with EO 12898 involves outreach to the potentially affected minority and/or low-income population to identify issues of importance that may not otherwise be considered. Outreach to affected communities would be conducted during the decision-making process and identification of any necessary mitigation measures.
- **MIN-LU-10.** DOT Order 5610.2 requires DOT agencies to establish opportunities for meaningful public involvement by members of minority populations during activities including identification of potential mitigation measures. Minority and low-income populations would be provided with access to information about health and environmental impacts, measures to avoid, minimize and/or to mitigate any disproportionately high and adverse effects and offsetting benefits and opportunities to enhance affected communities, neighborhoods, or individuals during an outreach program conducted as part of the decision-making process.
- **MIN-LU-11.** As indicated in the Environmental Consequences section above, many proposed curve realignments involve multiple segments, some near and some distant from environmental justice communities. A potential avoidance/minimization strategy would be to omit portions of multiple segment curve realignments that include environmental justice communities or where such impacts could be deemed to be disproportionately concentrated.
- **MIN-LU-12.** Special attention would be given to any permanent impact categories that are commonly of concern for this type of project and to those that previously have been identified as being of concern. These include:
 - Air quality
 - Noise and vibration
 - Public health
 - Visual resources/aesthetics
 - Parklands
 - Relocation

3.5.6 SUBSEQUENT ANALYSIS

Prior to implementing components of the Build Alternative, site specific evaluation should be conducted of the potential for land use compatibility and the need for property acquisition, including the potential for displacement of homes or businesses or substantial conflict with locally adopted land use policies. Any homes or businesses with the potential for displacement could be studied through a relocation impact analysis. If project-level environmental review under NEPA proceeds, anticipated effects to identified environmental justice communities would be assessed with best-available information to help determine whether impacts are disproportionate on minority or low-income communities. Additional environmental assessment and design development to determine alignment options during future studies will ensure a more precise evaluation of site-specific impacts and mitigation effectiveness.



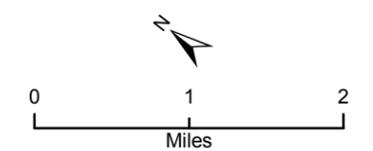
Legend

Land Use

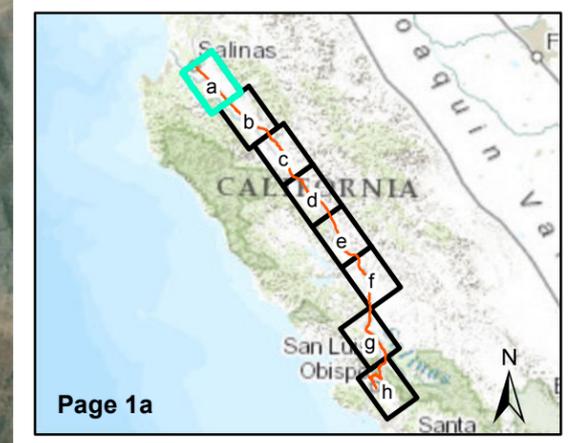
- Agriculture
- City Roads
- Commercial
- Industrial
- Mixed Use
- Open Space
- Other
- Public Facilities
- ROW
- Recreation
- Residential
- Rural Lands

Project Components

- Existing Alignment
- Sidings
- Realignments



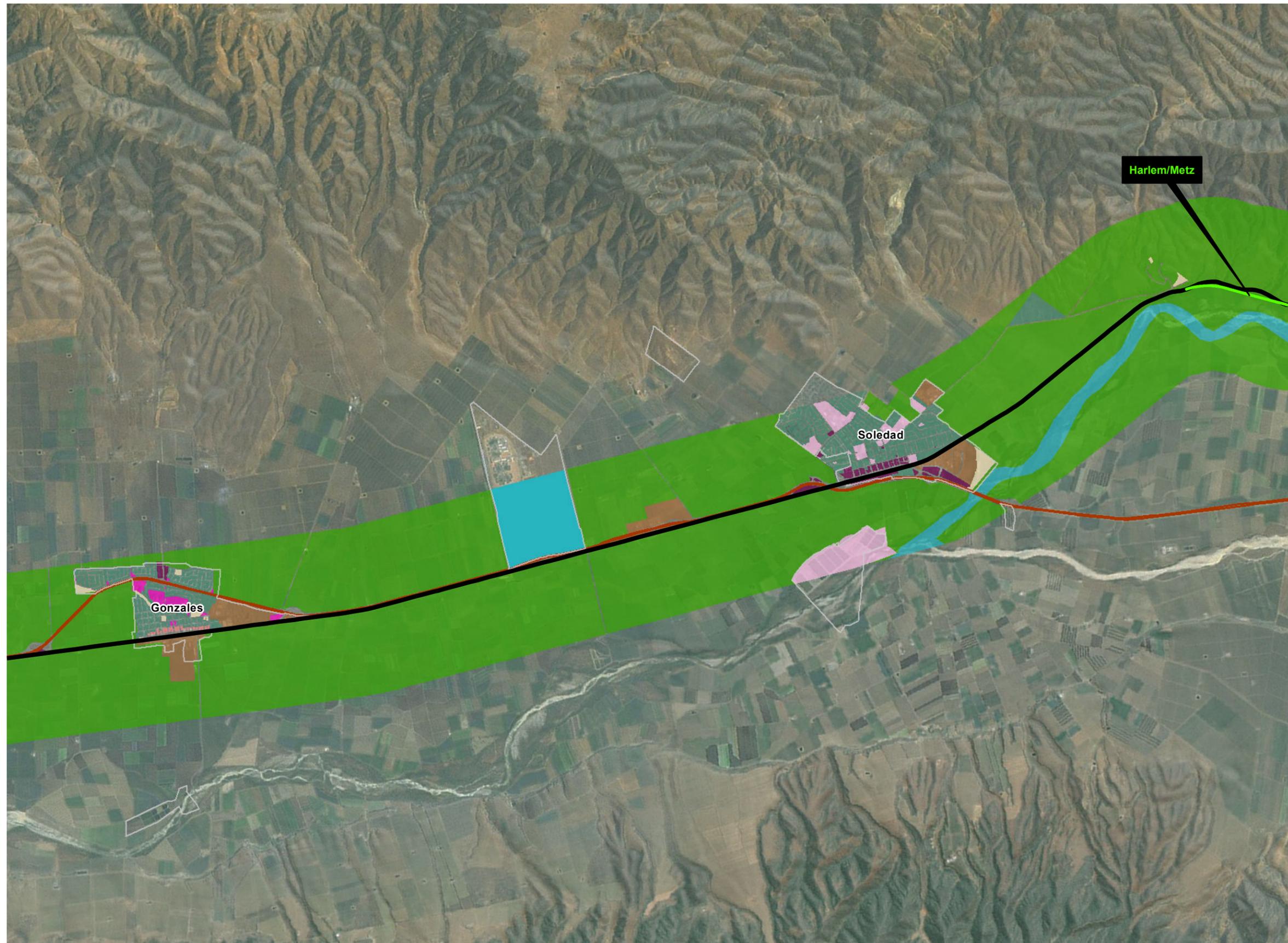
1:75,000



Generalized Existing Land Uses **Figure 3.5-1a**

Source: ICF International, 2013

This page intentionally left blank.



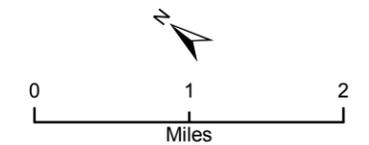
Legend

Land Use

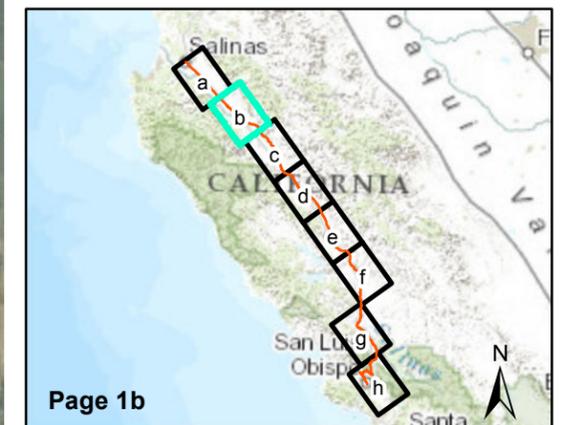
- Agriculture
- City Roads
- Commercial
- Industrial
- Mixed Use
- Open Space
- Other
- Public Facilities
- ROW
- Recreation
- Residential
- Rural Lands

Project Components

- Existing Alignment
- Sidings
- Realignments



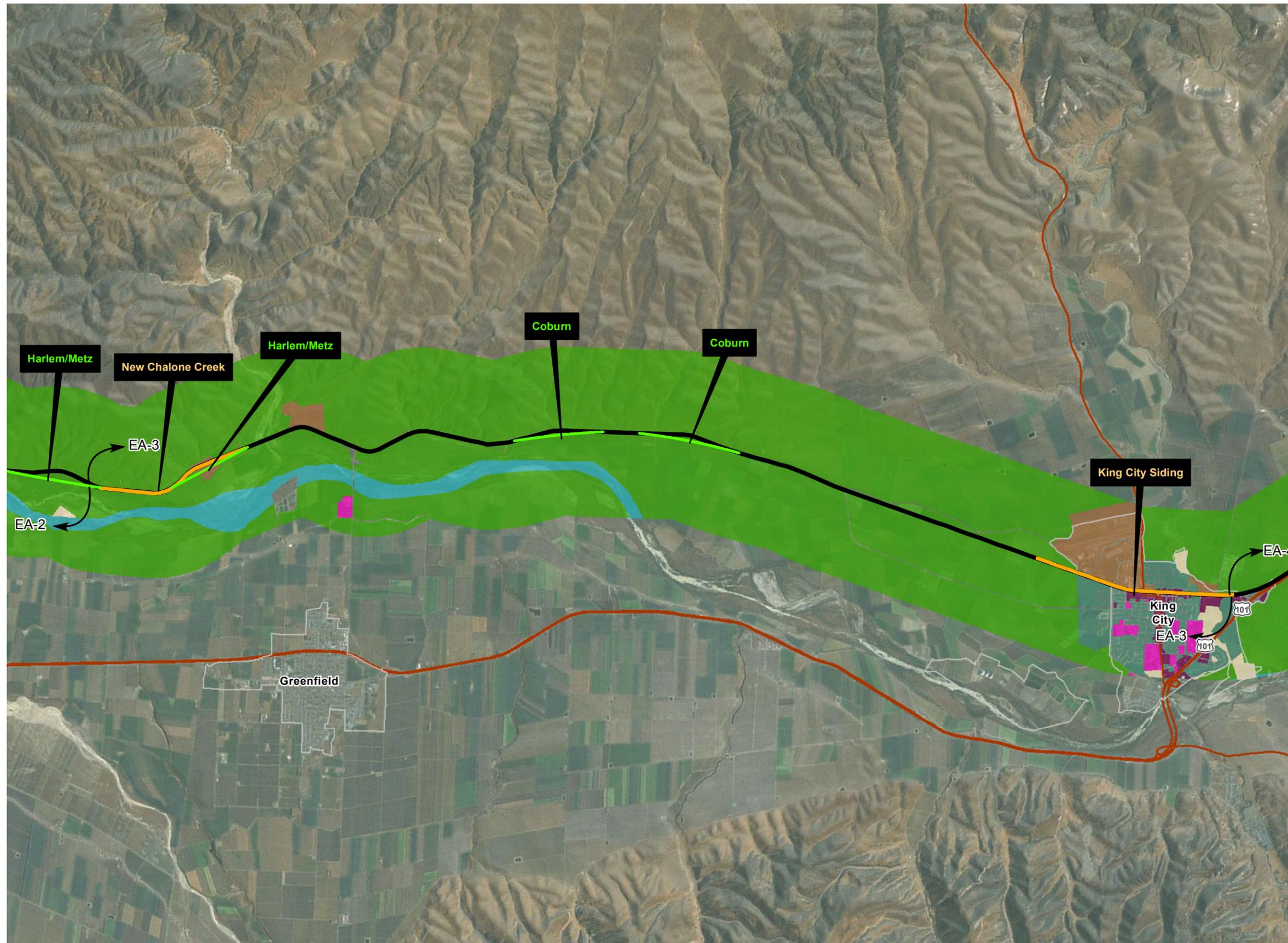
1:75,000



Page 1b

Generalized Existing Land Uses **Figure 3.5-1b**

This page intentionally left blank.



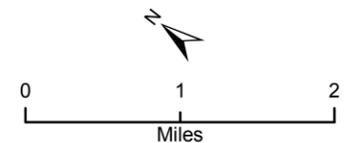
Legend

Land Use

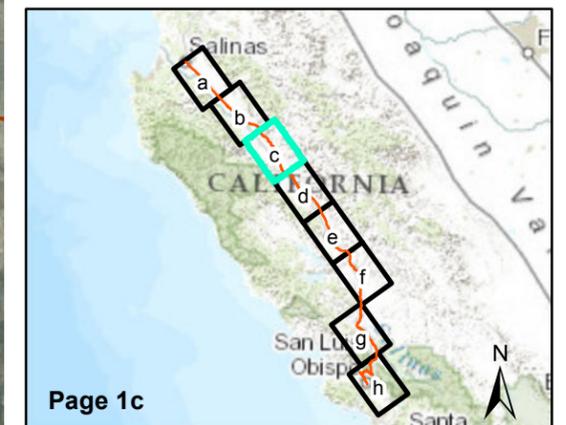
- Agriculture
- City Roads
- Commercial
- Industrial
- Mixed Use
- Open Space
- Other
- Public Facilities
- ROW
- Recreation
- Residential
- Rural Lands

Project Components

- Existing Alignment
- Sidings
- Realignments



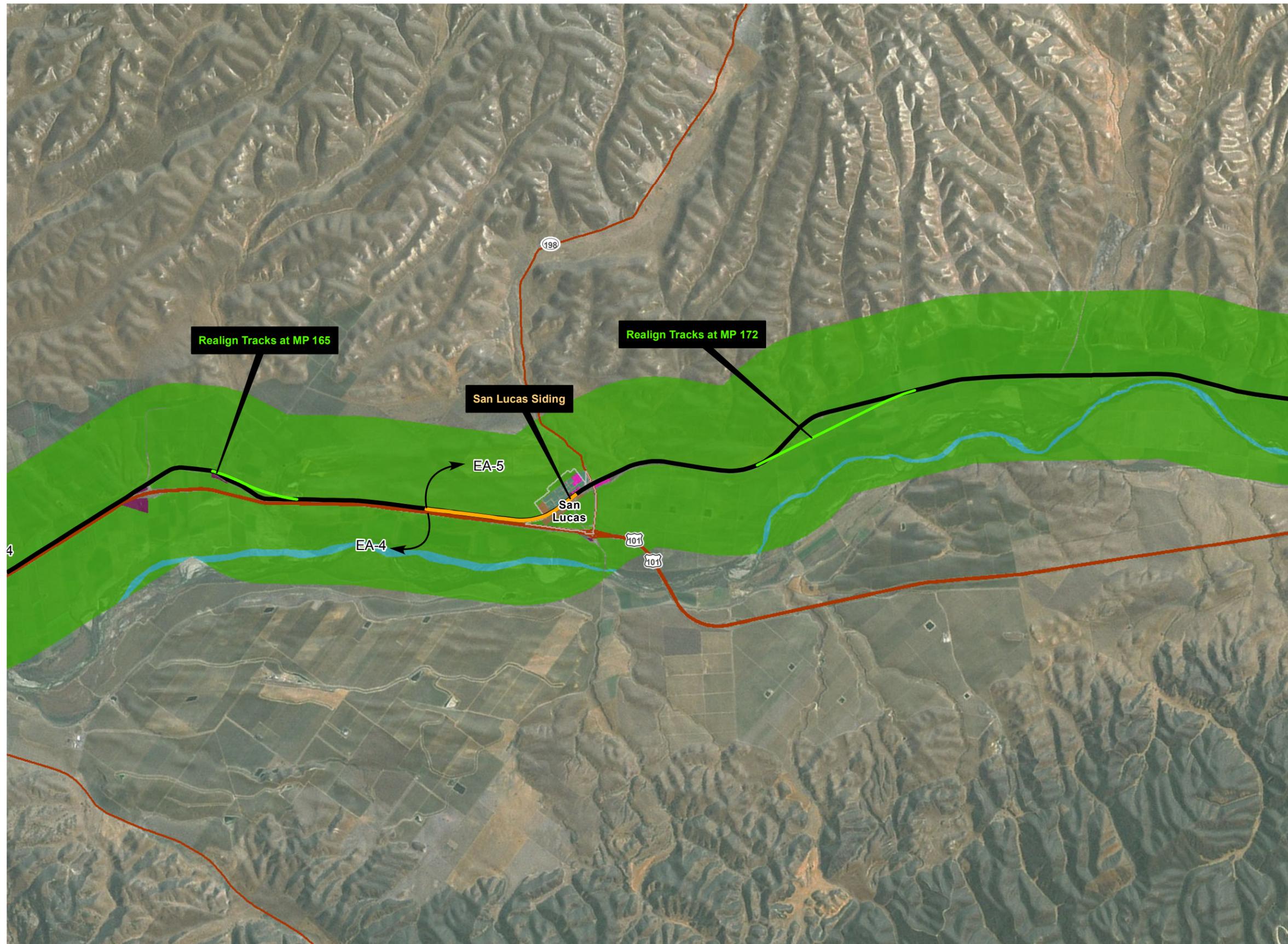
1:75,000



Page 1c

Generalized Existing Land Uses **Figure 3.5-1c**

This page intentionally left blank.



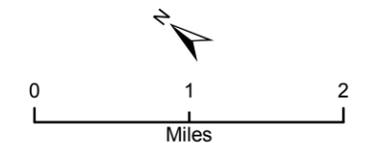
Legend

Land Use

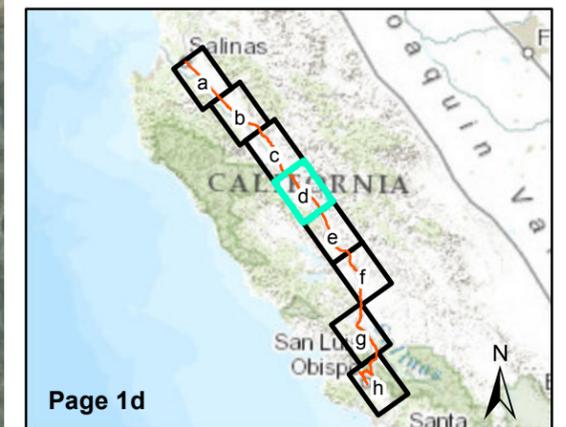
- Agriculture
- City Roads
- Commercial
- Industrial
- Mixed Use
- Open Space
- Other
- Public Facilities
- ROW
- Recreation
- Residential
- Rural Lands

Project Components

- Existing Alignment
- Sidings
- Realignments



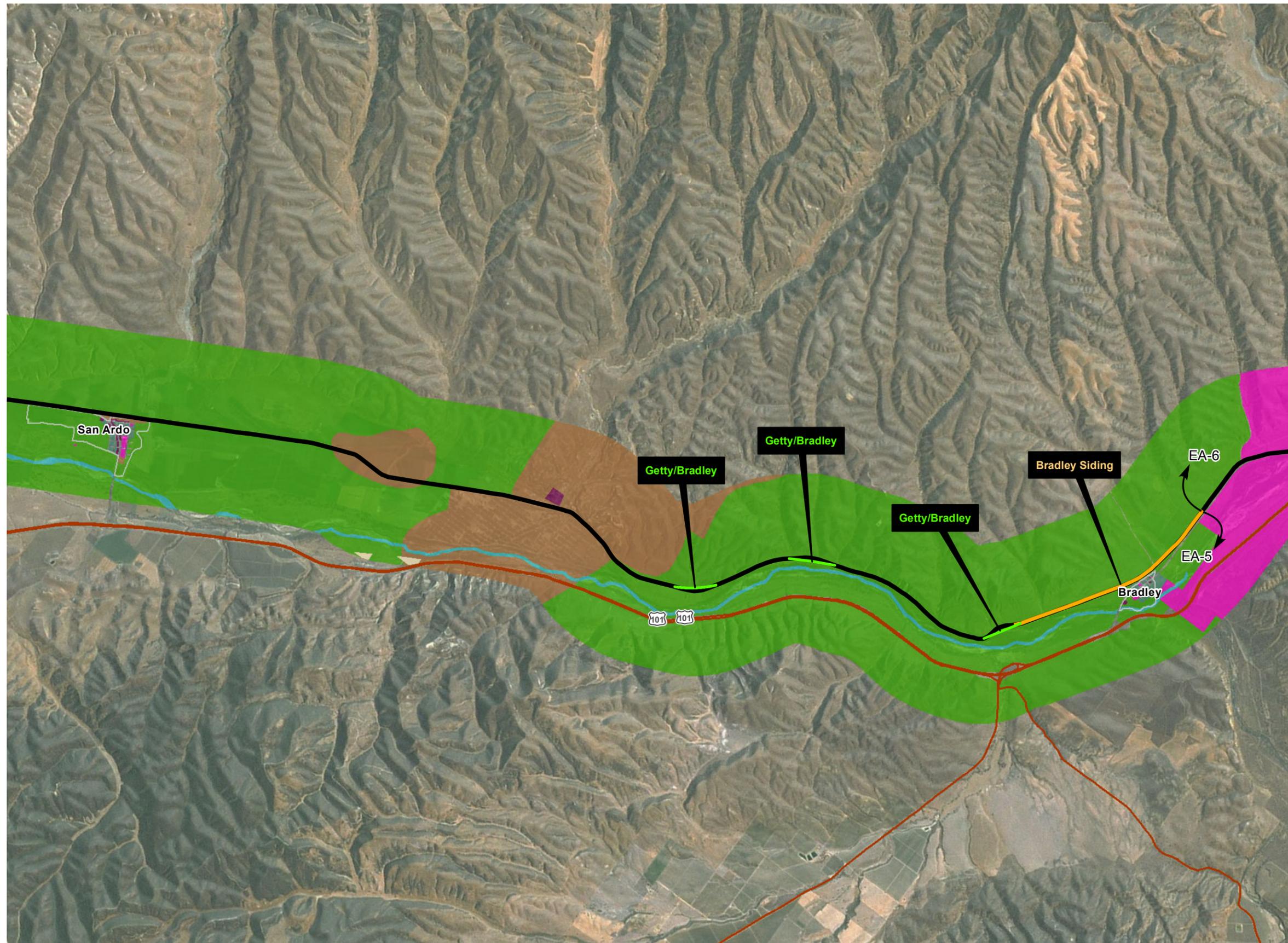
1:75,000



Page 1d

Generalized Existing Land Uses **Figure 3.5-1d**

This page intentionally left blank.



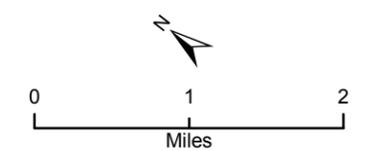
Legend

Land Use

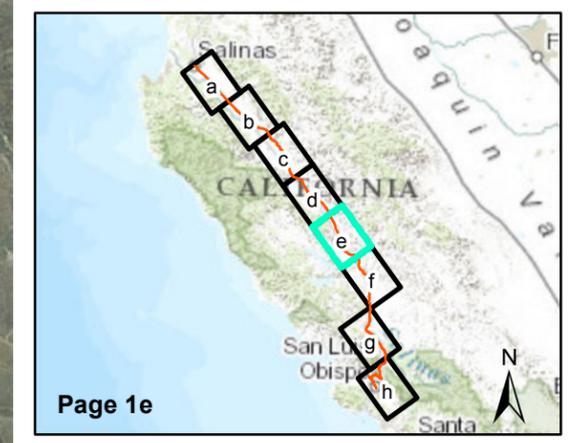
- Agriculture
- City Roads
- Commercial
- Industrial
- Mixed Use
- Open Space
- Other
- Public Facilities
- ROW
- Recreation
- Residential
- Rural Lands

Project Components

- Existing Alignment
- Sidings
- Realignments



1:75,000

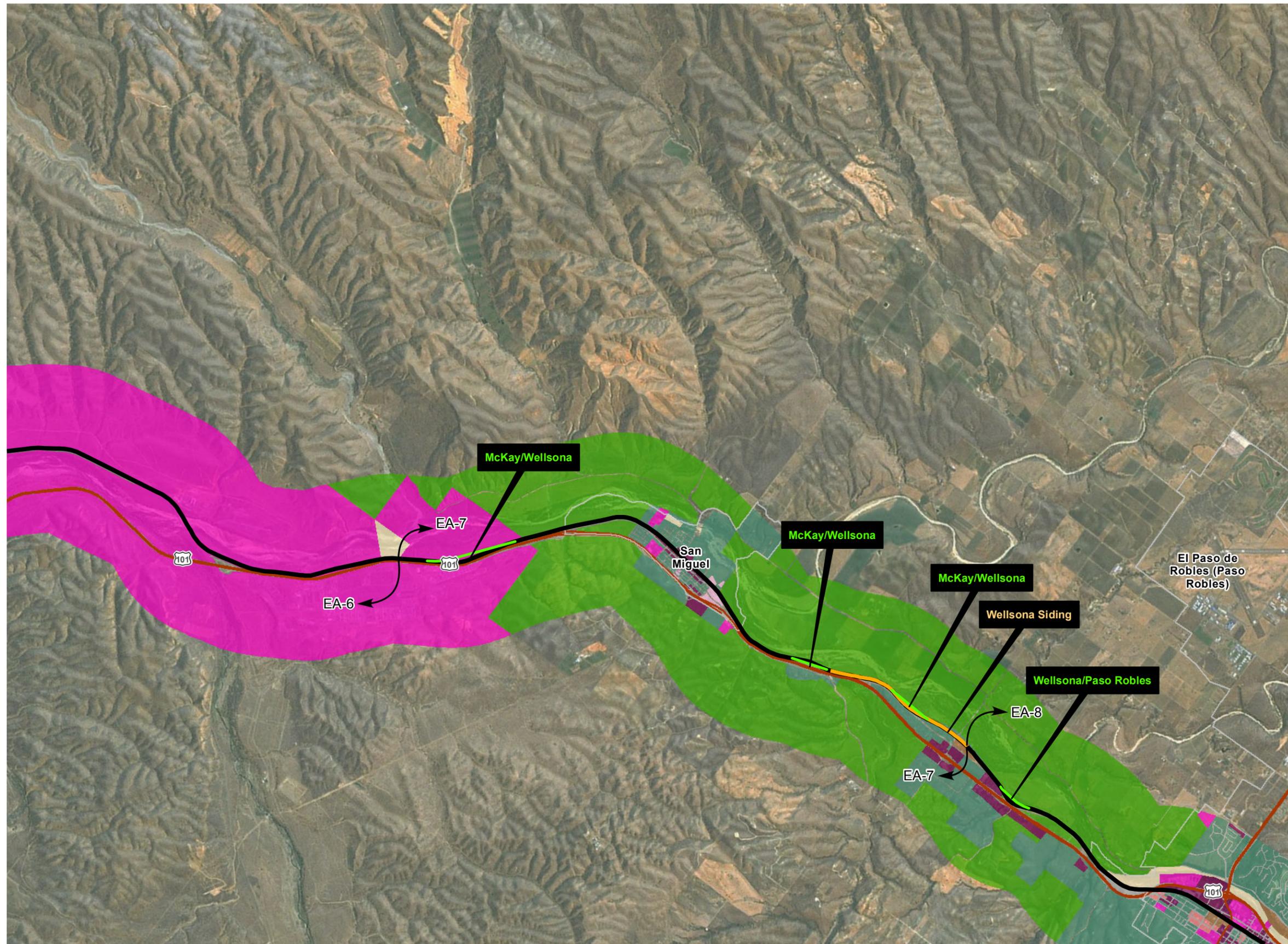


Page 1e

Generalized Existing Land Uses **Figure 3.5-1e**

Source: ICF International, 2013

This page intentionally left blank.



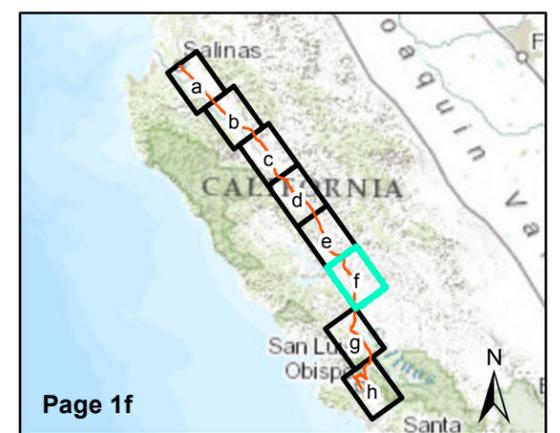
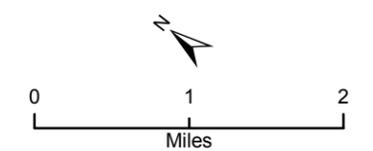
Legend

Land Use

- Agriculture
- City Roads
- Commercial
- Industrial
- Mixed Use
- Open Space
- Other
- Public Facilities
- ROW
- Recreation
- Residential
- Rural Lands

Project Components

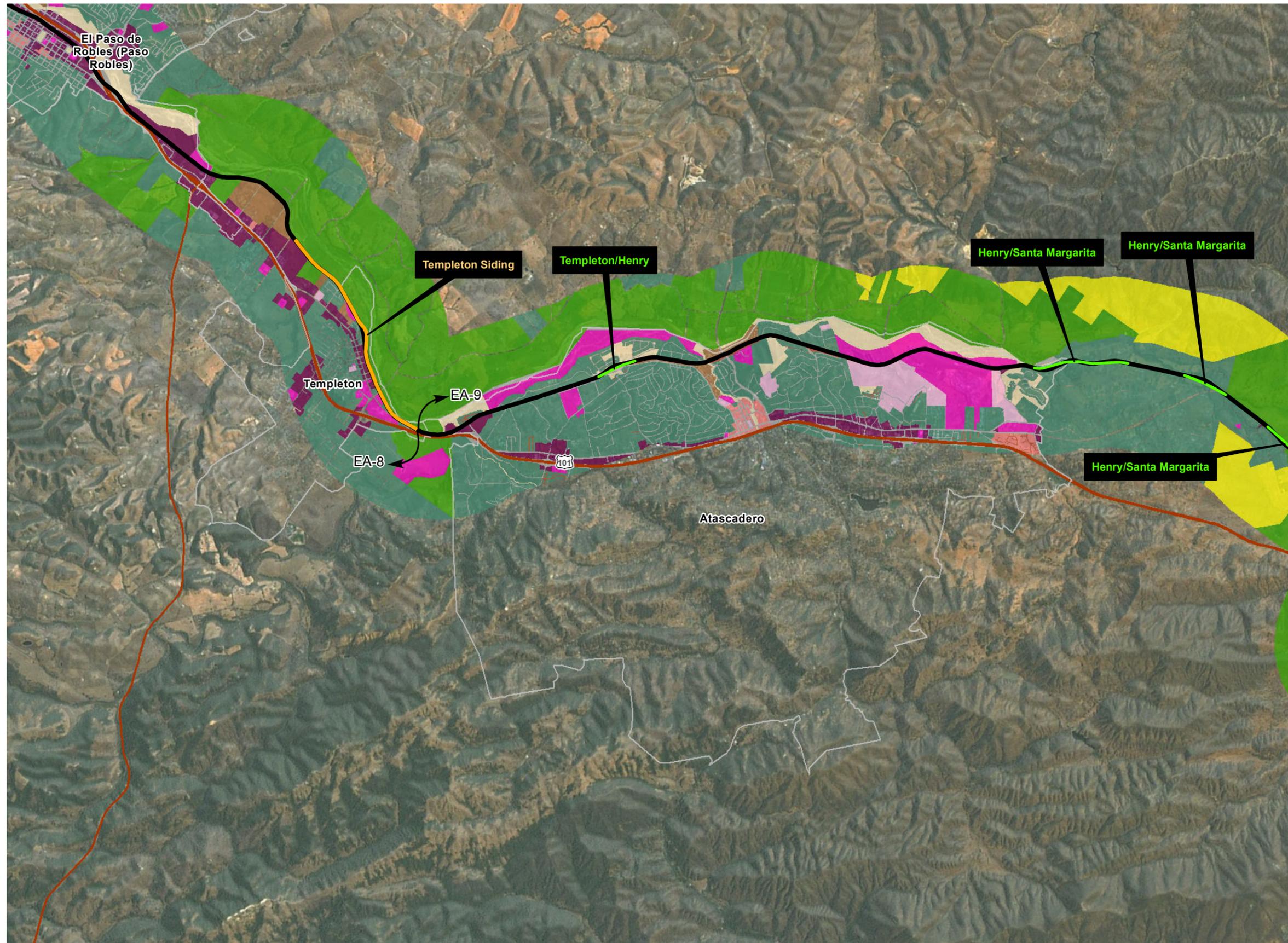
- Existing Alignment
- Sidings
- Realignments



Generalized Existing Land Uses **Figure 3.5-1f**

Source: ICF International, 2013

This page intentionally left blank.



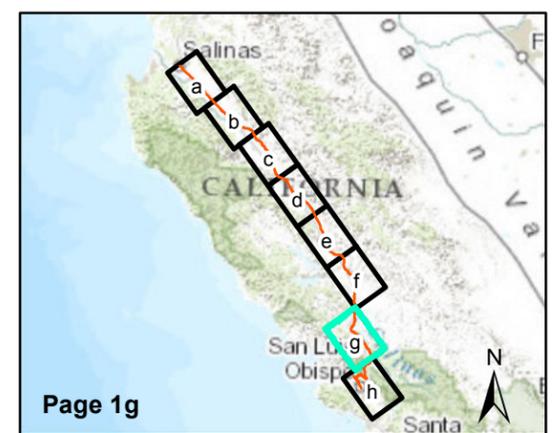
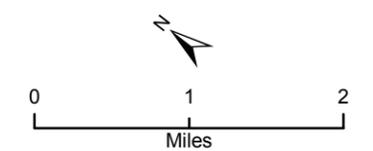
Legend

Land Use

- Agriculture
- City Roads
- Commercial
- Industrial
- Mixed Use
- Open Space
- Other
- Public Facilities
- ROW
- Recreation
- Residential
- Rural Lands

Project Components

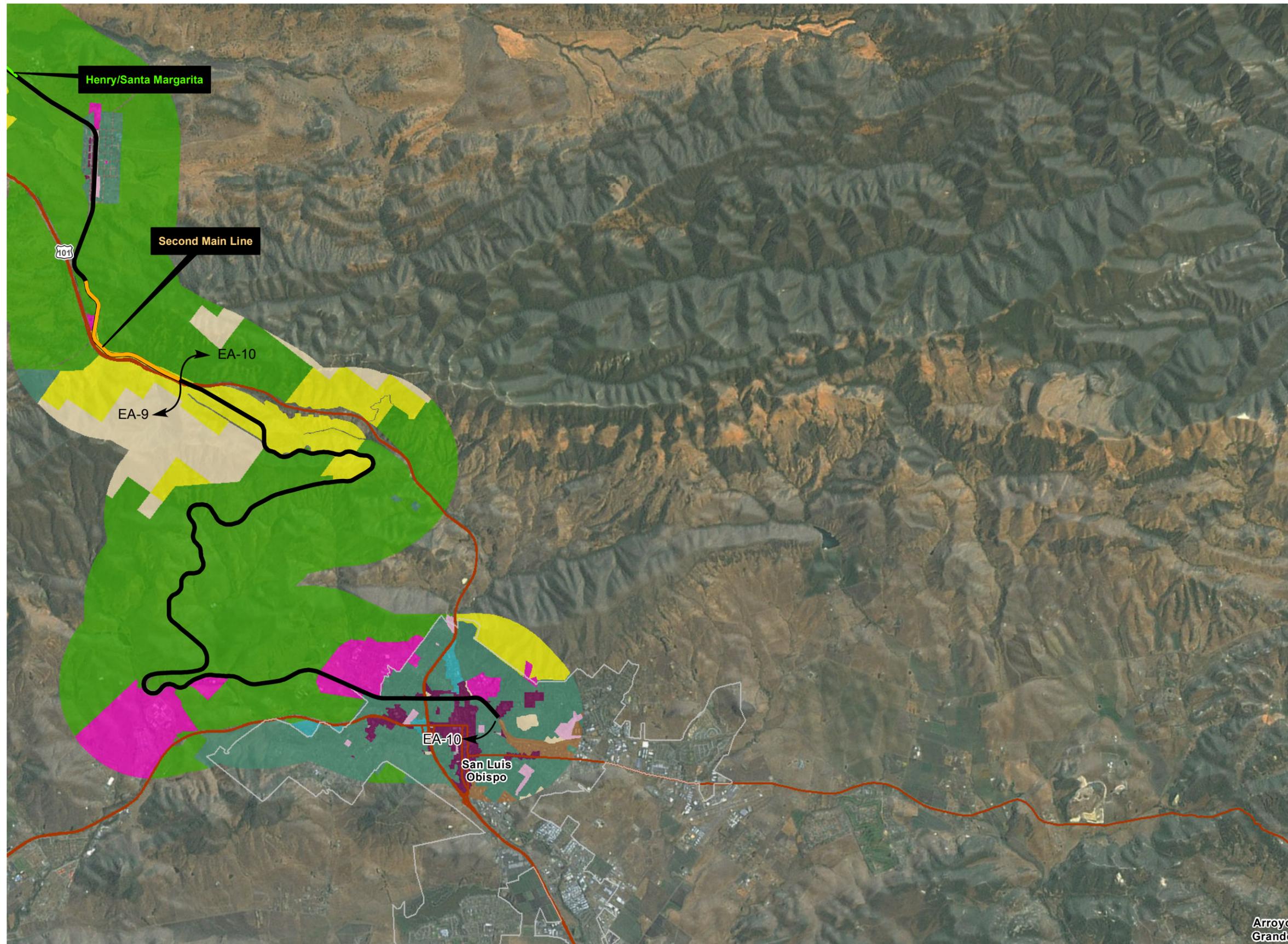
- Existing Alignment
- Sidings
- Realignments



Generalized Existing Land Uses **Figure 3.5-1g**

Source: ICF International, 2013

This page intentionally left blank.



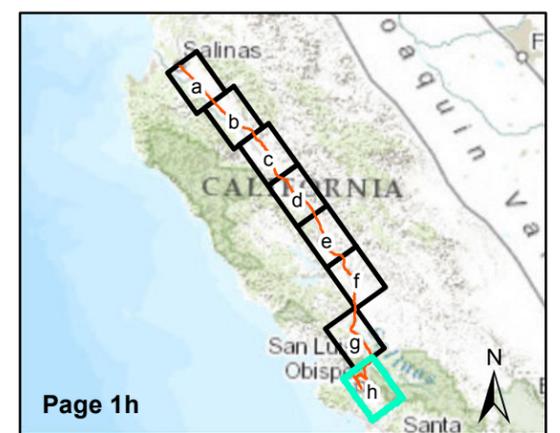
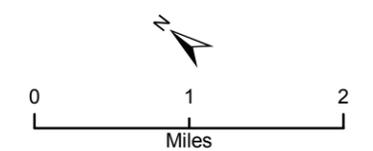
Legend

Land Use

- Agriculture
- City Roads
- Commercial
- Industrial
- Mixed Use
- Open Space
- Other
- Public Facilities
- ROW
- Recreation
- Residential
- Rural Lands

Project Components

- Existing Alignment
- Sidings
- Realignments

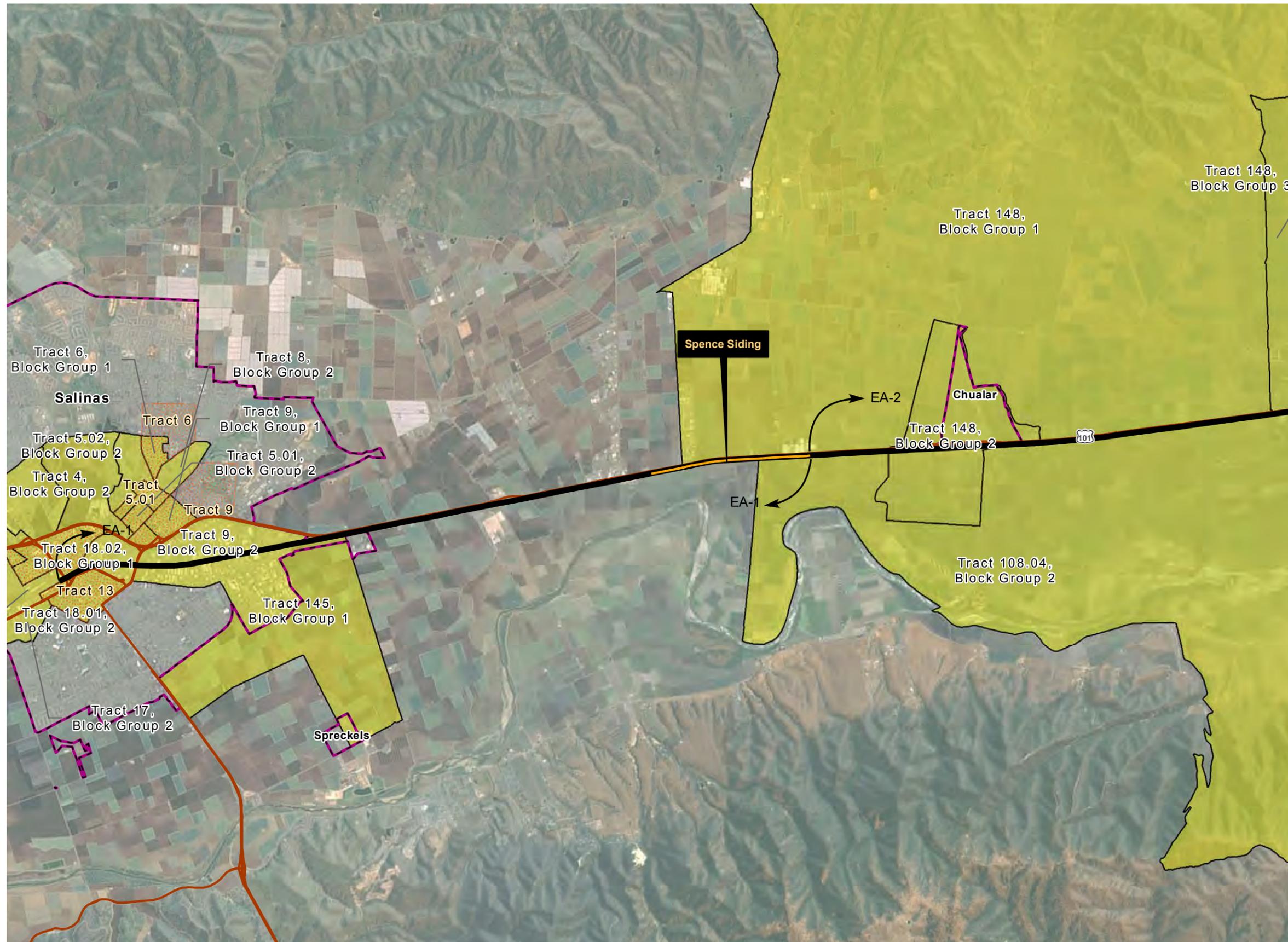


Arroyo Grande

Generalized Existing Land Uses **Figure 3.5-1h**

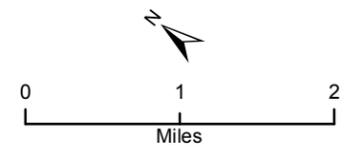
Source: ICF International, 2013

This page intentionally left blank.



Legend

- Environmental Justice Block Groups (Minority)
 - Environmental Justice Tracts (Low-income)
 - Urban Areas
- Project Components**
- Existing Alignment
 - Sidings
 - Realignments



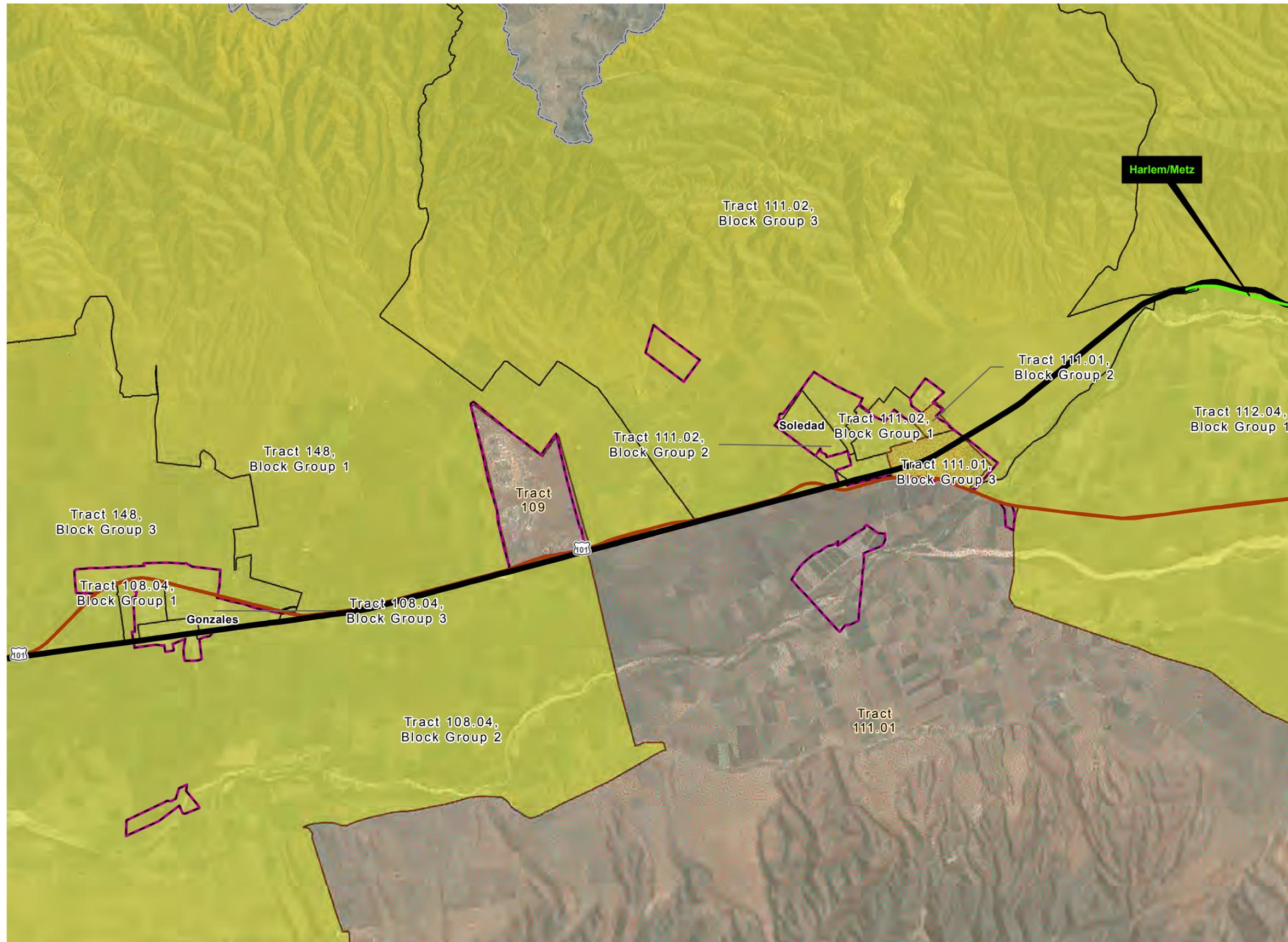
1:75,000



Page 2a

Environmental Justice **Figure 3.5-2a**

This page intentionally left blank.

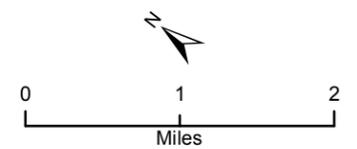


Legend

- Environmental Justice Block Groups (Minority)
- Environmental Justice Tracts (Low-income)
- Urban Areas

Project Components

- Existing Alignment
- Sidings
- Realignments



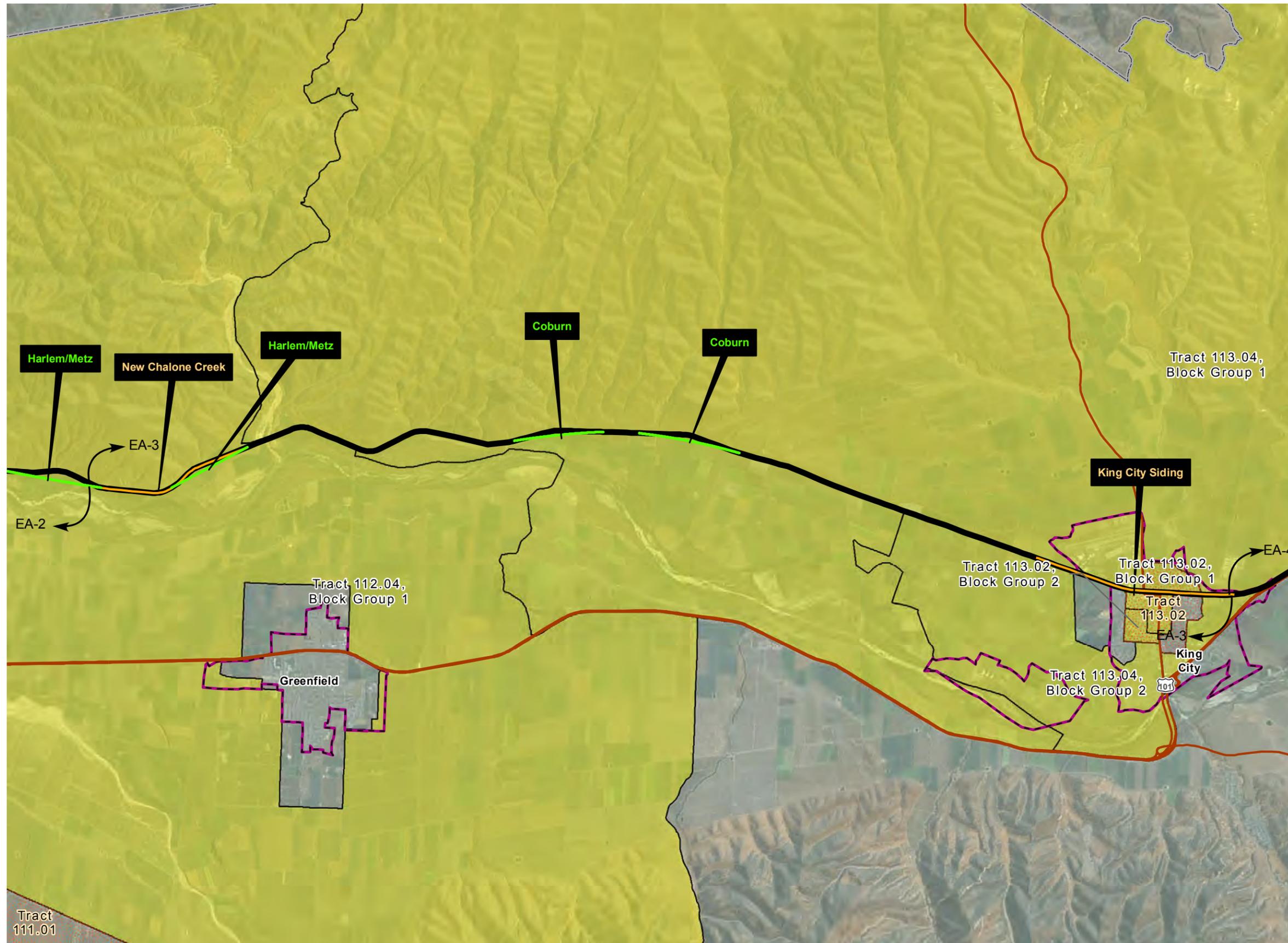
1:75,000



Page 2b

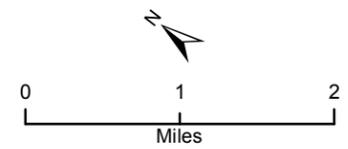
Environmental Justice **Figure 3.5-2b**

This page intentionally left blank.

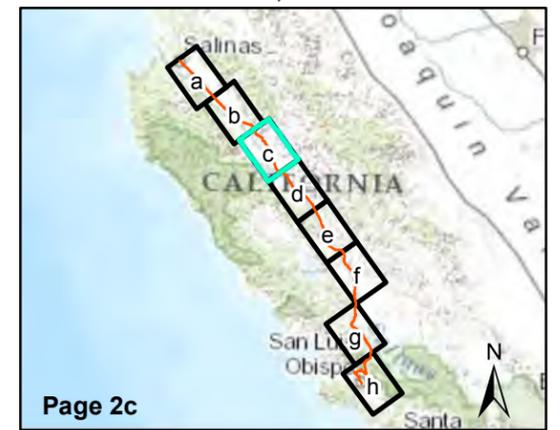


Legend

- Environmental Justice Block Groups (Minority)
- Environmental Justice Tracts (Low-income)
- Urban Areas
- Project Components**
- Existing Alignment
- Sidings
- Realignments



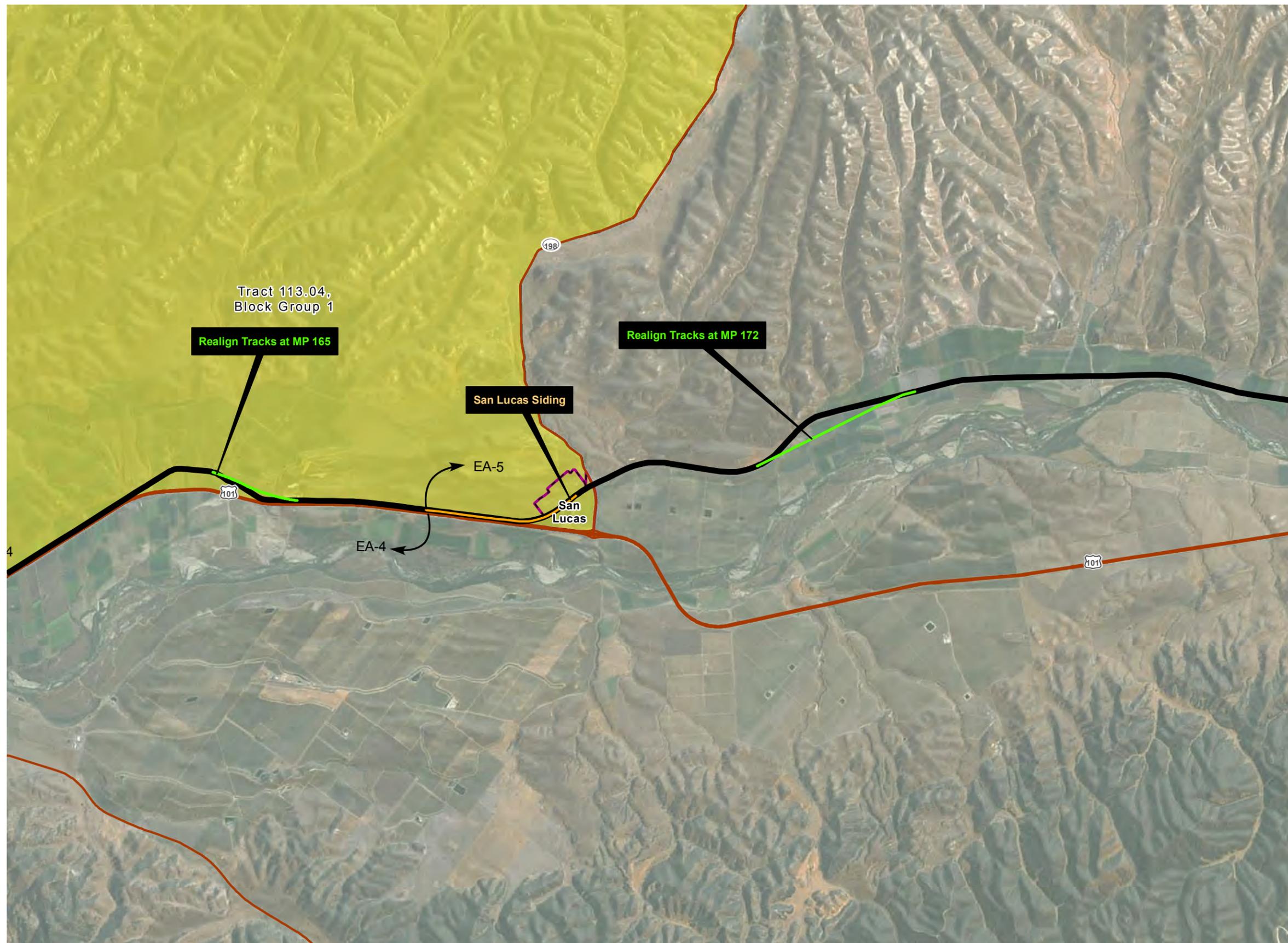
1:75,000



Page 2c

Environmental Justice **Figure 3.5-2c**

This page intentionally left blank.

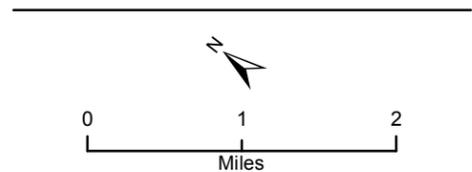


Legend

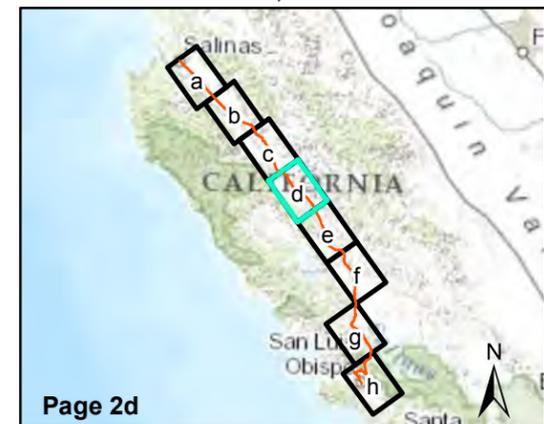
- Environmental Justice Block Groups (Minority)
- Environmental Justice Tracts (Low-income)
- Urban Areas

Project Components

- Existing Alignment
- Sidings
- Realignments

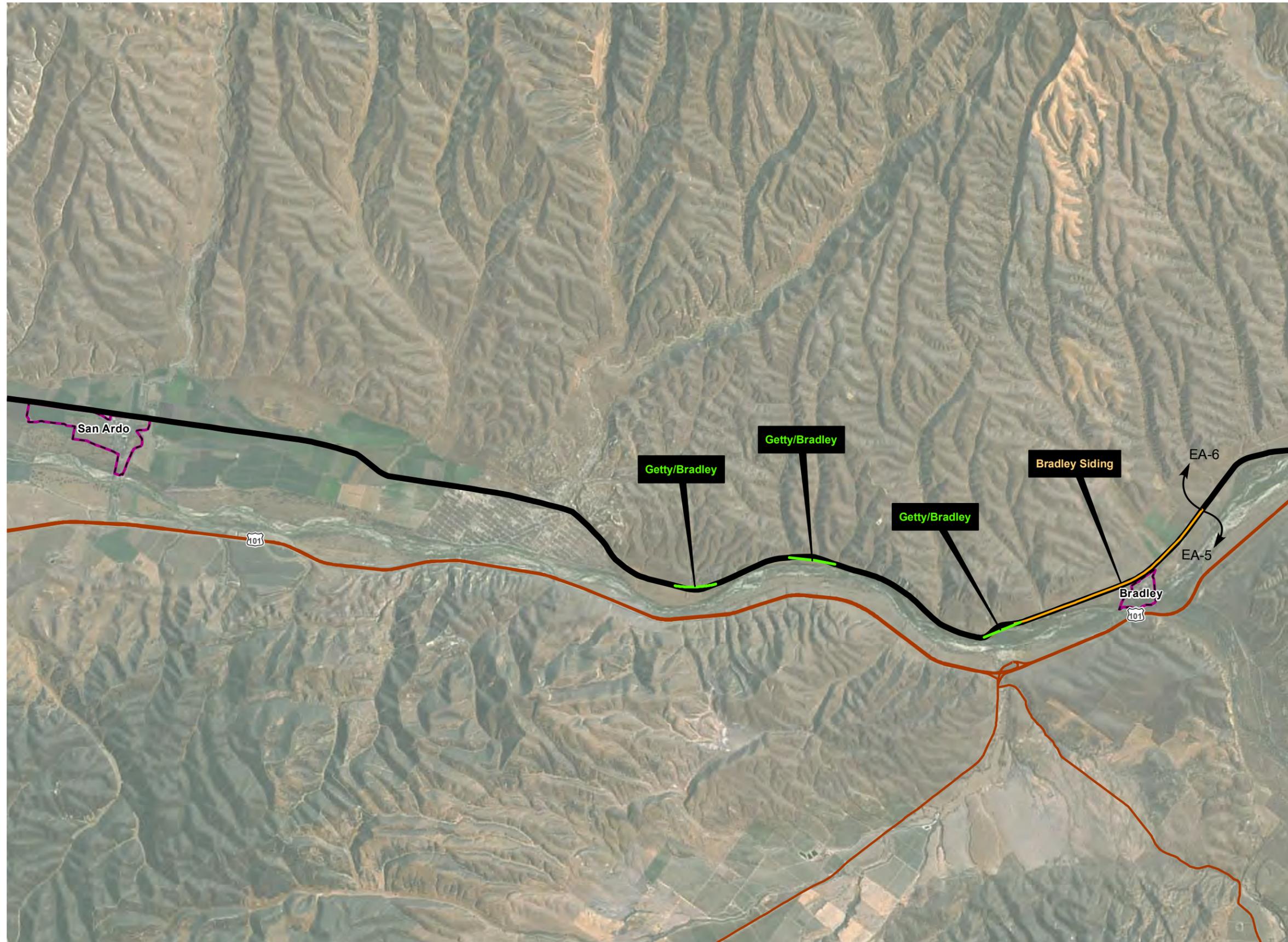


1:75,000



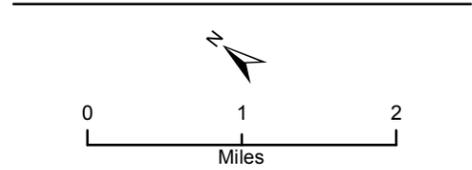
Environmental Justice **Figure 3.5-2d**

This page intentionally left blank.

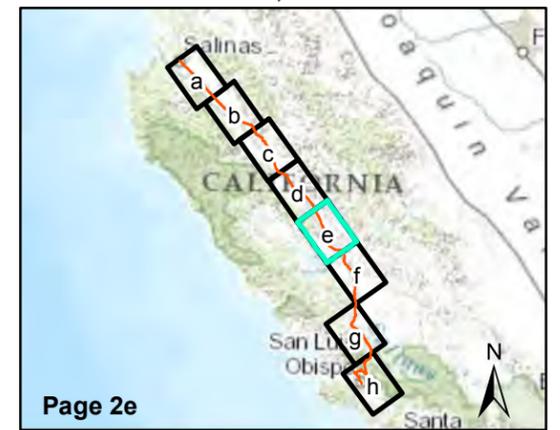


Legend

- Environmental Justice Block Groups (Minority)
 - Environmental Justice Tracts (Low-income)
 - Urban Areas
- Project Components**
- Existing Alignment
 - Sidings
 - Realignments



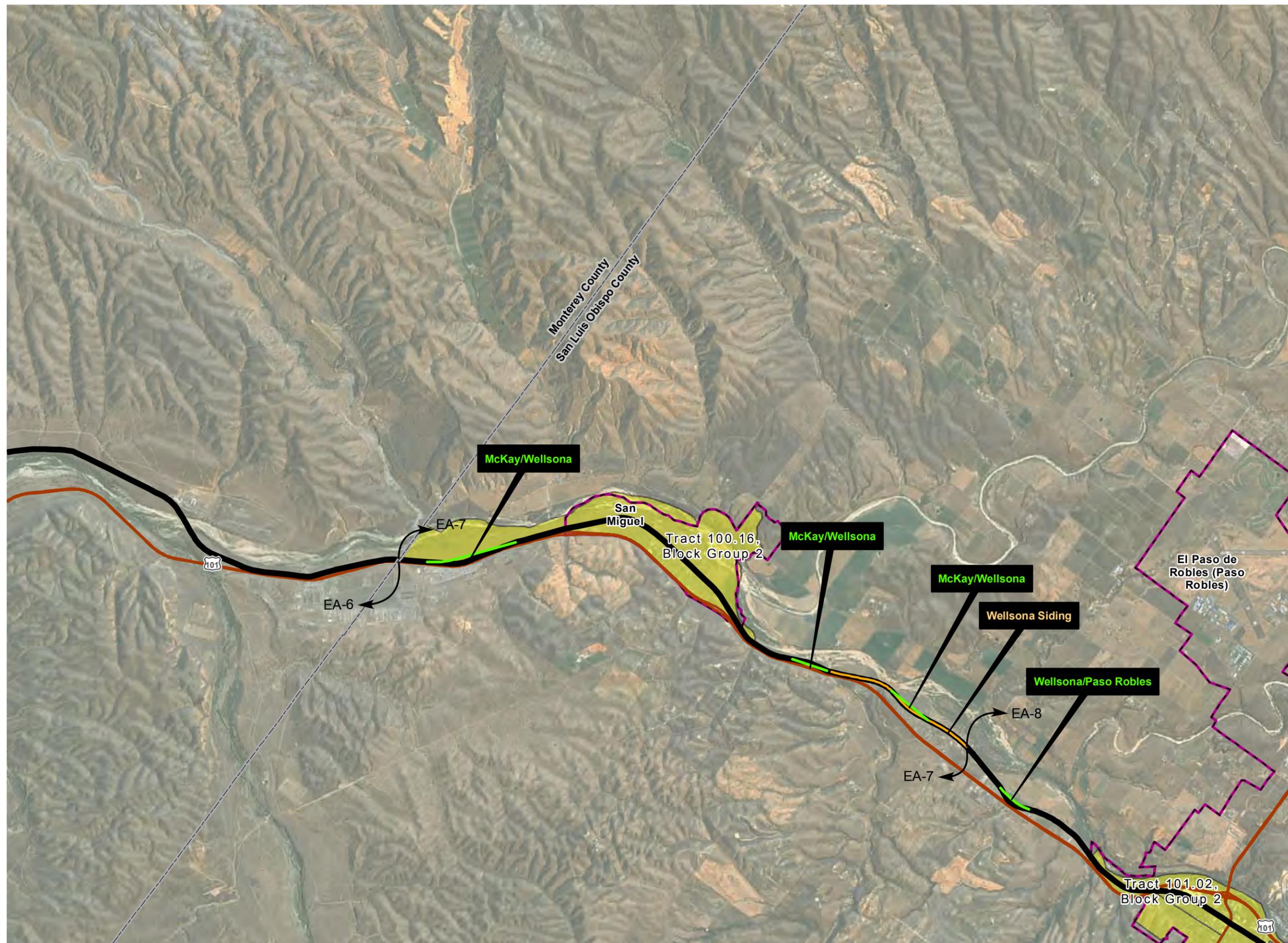
1:75,000



Page 2e

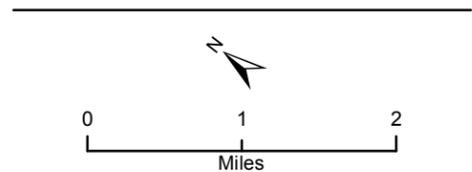
Environmental Justice **Figure 3.5-2e**

This page intentionally left blank.

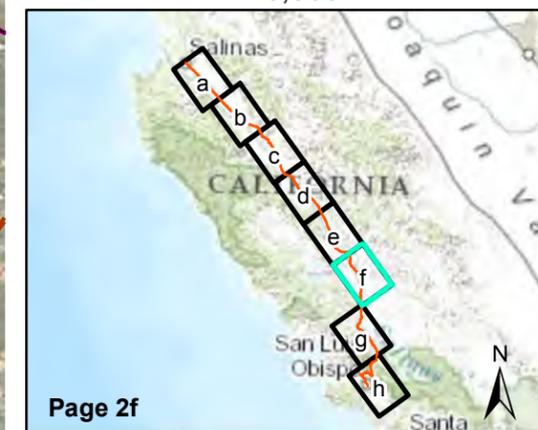


Legend

- Environmental Justice Block Groups (Minority)
 - Environmental Justice Tracts (Low-income)
 - Urban Areas
- Project Components**
- Existing Alignment
 - Sidings
 - Realignments



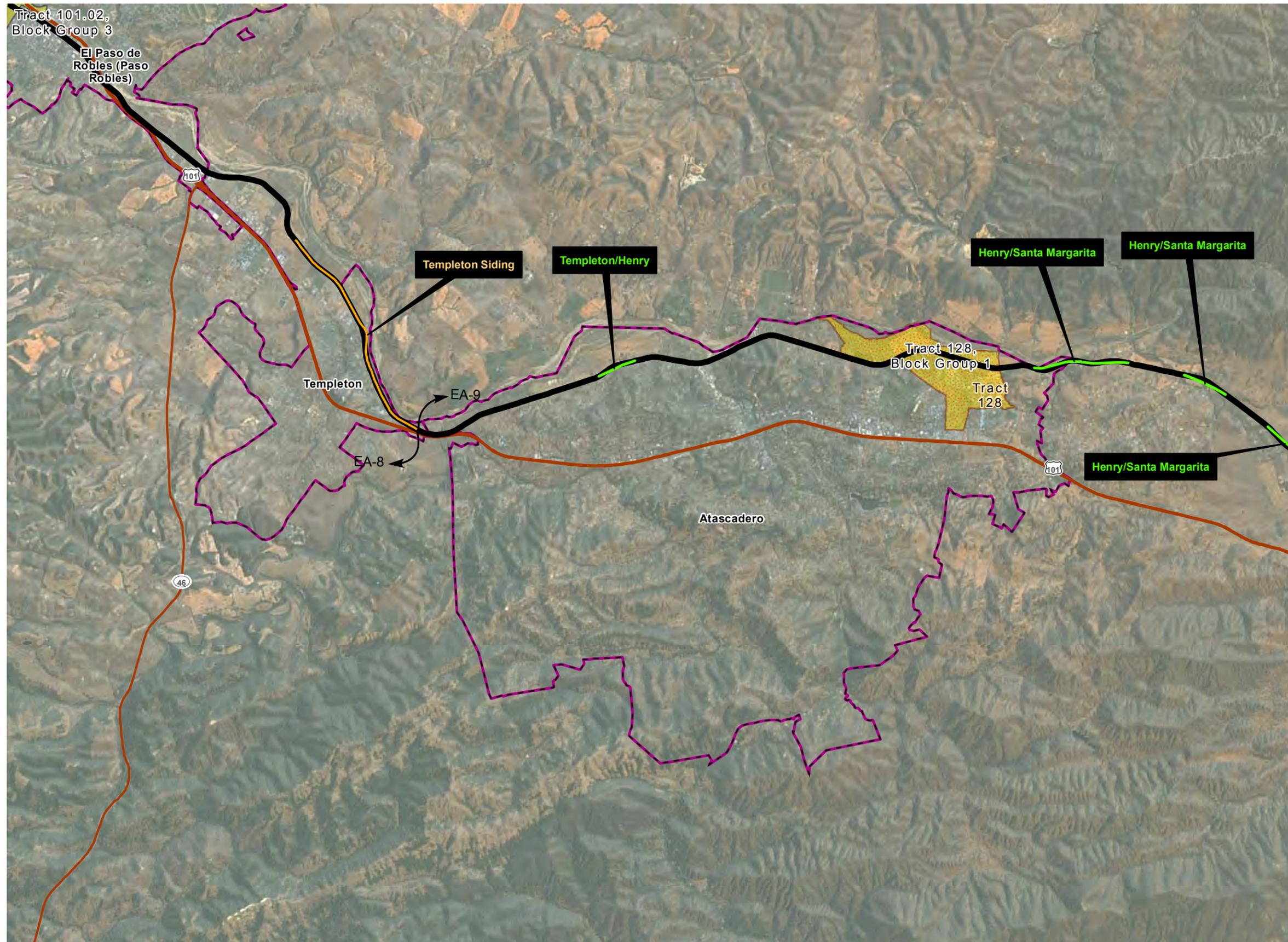
1:75,000



Page 2f

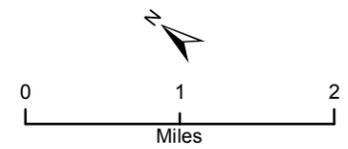
Environmental Justice **Figure 3.5-2f**

This page intentionally left blank.



Legend

- Environmental Justice Block Groups (Minority)
- Environmental Justice Tracts (Low-income)
- Urban Areas
- Project Components**
- Existing Alignment
- Sidings
- Realignments



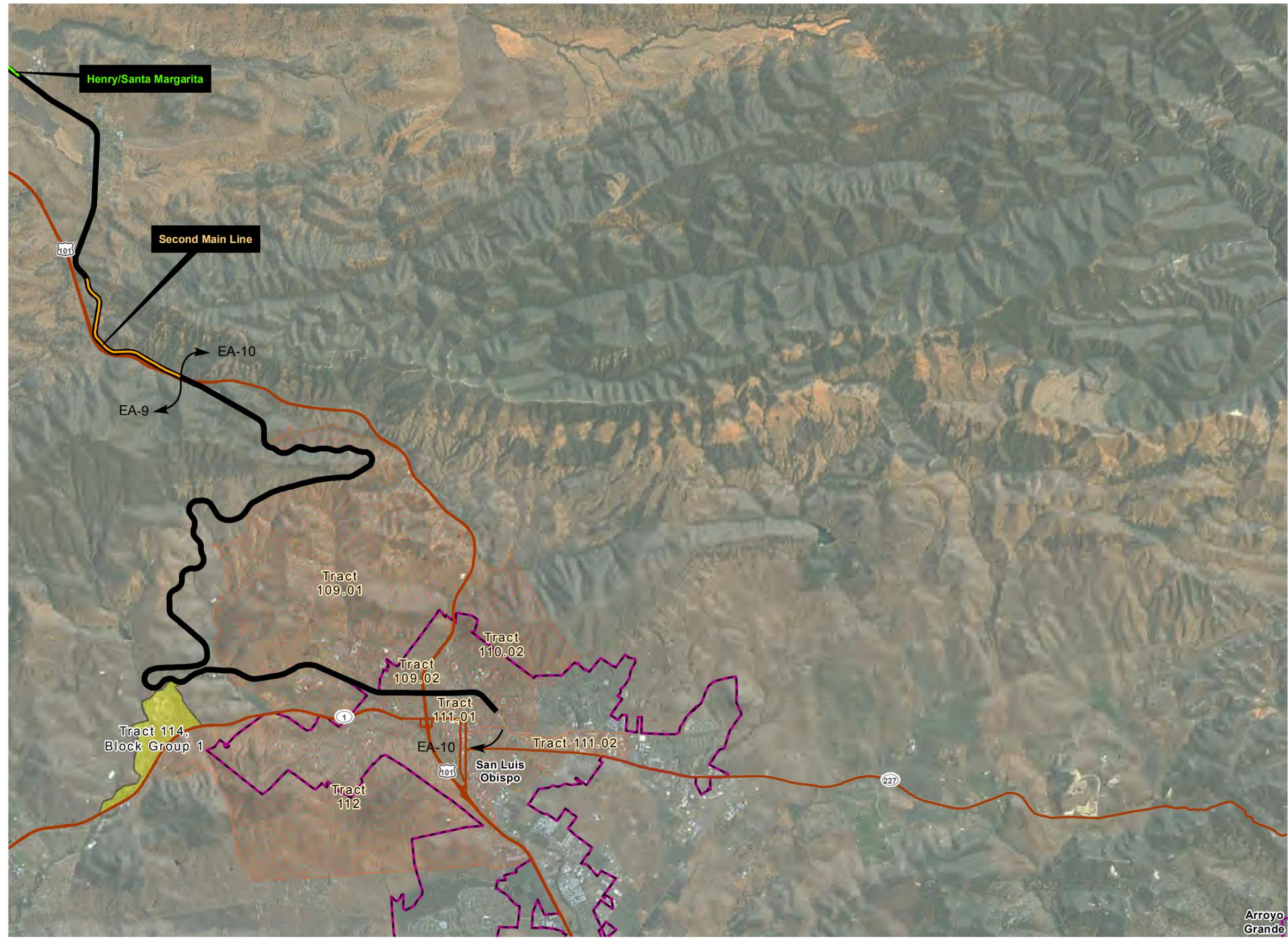
1:75,000



Page 2g

Environmental Justice **Figure 3.5-2g**

This page intentionally left blank.

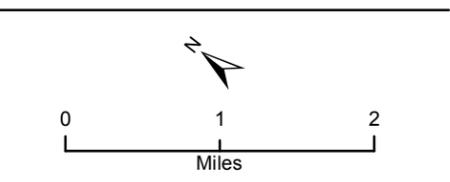


Legend

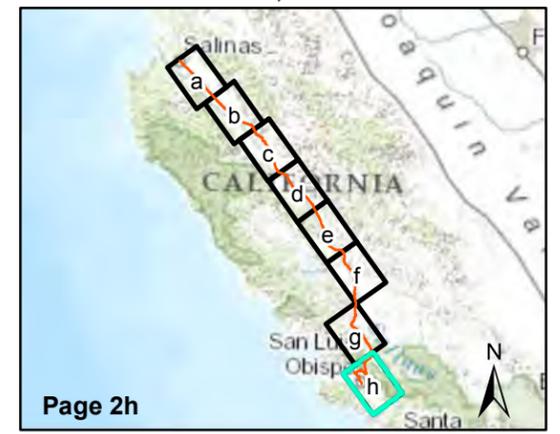
- Environmental Justice Block Groups (Minority)
- Environmental Justice Tracts (Low-income)
- Urban Areas

Project Components

- Existing Alignment
- Sidings
- Realignments



1:75,000



Page 2h

Arroyo Grande

Environmental Justice **Figure 3.5-2h**

Source: ICF International, 2013

This page intentionally left blank.