

**FEDERAL HIGHWAY ADMINISTRATION
FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT (FONSI)**

for

USA Parkway (State Route 439)

Federal Project Number: SPSR-0439(001)
NDOT Project Number: 73708
EA Document Number: FHWA-NV-EA 13.02

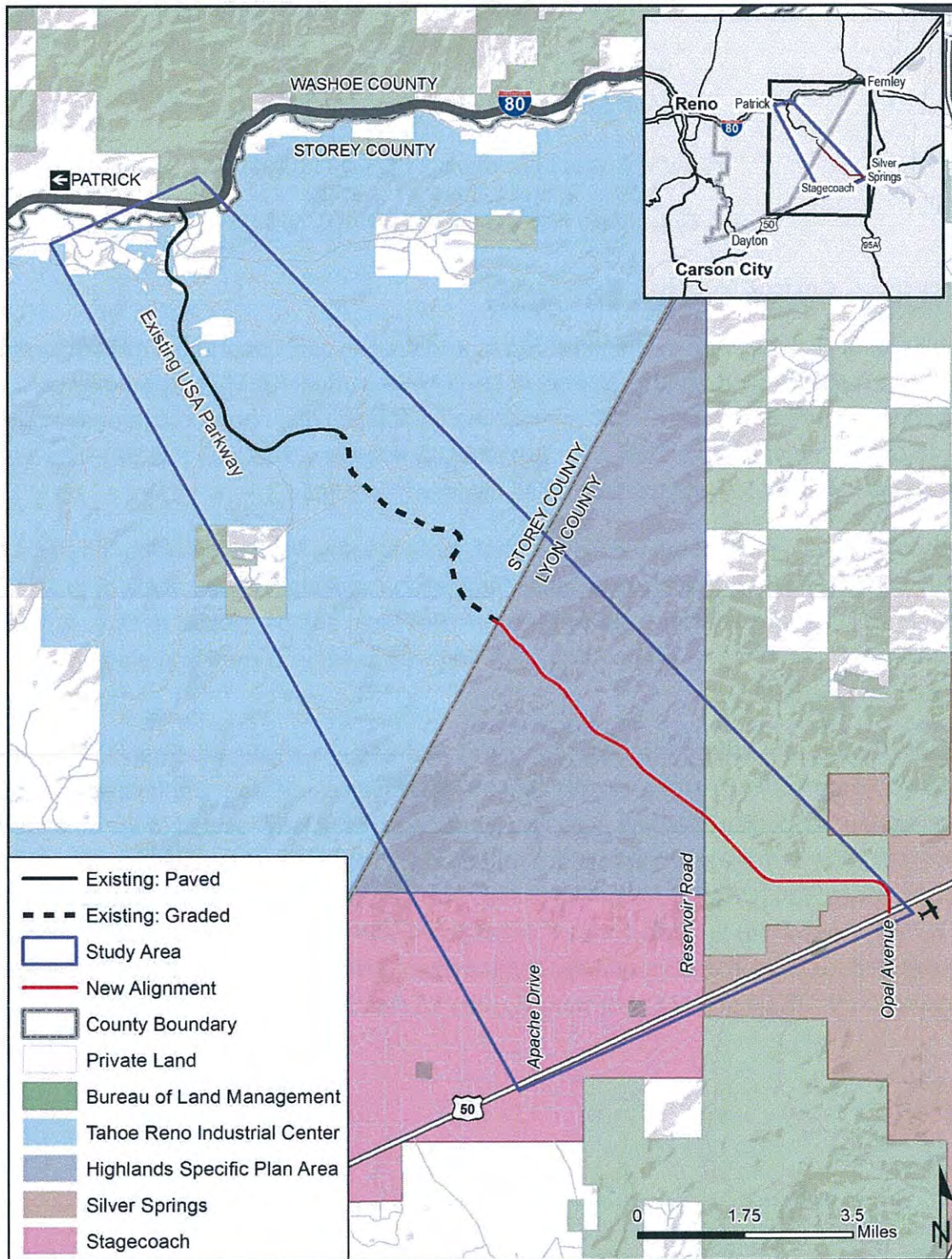
1. STUDY AREA DESCRIPTION

The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and the Nevada Department of Transportation (NDOT), in cooperation with the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), prepared an Environmental Assessment (EA) to analyze the completion of a north-south transportation route for 18.5 miles between Interstate 80 (I-80) and U.S. Highway Route 50 (US 50). The study area is located within Storey and Lyon counties as shown on Figure 1.

In Storey County, most of the land in the study area is within the Tahoe-Reno Industrial Center (TRIC). TRIC is a 107,000-acre industrial complex that includes 30,000 acres of developable land, of which approximately 8,600 acres have been sold and developed to date. A number of access roads presently tie into existing USA Parkway to serve current and planned development in TRIC.

In Lyon County, the study area includes four main areas: the Highlands Specific Planning Area, BLM-managed public land (BLM land), and the communities of Silver Springs and Stagecoach. The Highlands Specific Planning Area is undeveloped. BLM land located in the study area is undeveloped and managed consistent with the *2001 Carson City Consolidated Resource Management Plan* (CRMP). According to the *Lyon County Comprehensive Master Plan* (LCCMP), most of the projected growth in the portion of the study area located in Lyon County is projected to occur in and around the community of Silver Springs, which is centered on the intersection of US 50 and U.S. Highway Route 95A (US 95A).

Figure 1. Study Area



Source: USA Parkway study team.

2. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

FHWA and NDOT studied numerous alternatives to 1) improve mobility, 2) improve travel efficiency, and 3) support existing and future land uses and economic growth in Storey and Lyon counties. The proposed action proposes to complete USA Parkway by providing two travel lanes in each direction between I-80 and US 50. Additional information on the Selected Alternative is included in Section 4 of this Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI).

The project is included in the *FY 2015-2024 Transportation System Projects* approved by the State Transportation Board of Directors in November 2014. The project is listed in the *FY 2015-2018 Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP)* as State Project ID ST20140001, and is listed in the *2014 Annual Work Program*, as part of the *FY 2016-2017 Short-Range Element*, as project LY20100020-16. The project is also included in NDOT's *Connecting Nevada*, which provides a framework to integrate various state, regional, and local planning efforts into a unified, cohesive vision. Lastly, the project is in the LCCMP (2010) and NDOT's *Nevada Statewide Transportation Plan (2008)*.

3. PURPOSE AND NEED

PURPOSE

The purpose of the project is to enhance local and regional access and mobility between I-80 and US 50 and to provide transportation infrastructure to support existing and future planned land uses and economic development in Storey and Lyon counties.

NEED

I-80 and US 50 are the two regional east-west transportation routes in the area. There are no north-south routes connecting I-80 and US 50 for approximately 30 miles between U.S. Highway Route 395 (US 395) and US 95A. The lack of north-south routes connecting I-80 and US 50 often result in out-of-direction travel and increased commuter travel times for trips between the US 50 corridor communities and major job centers in both the cities of Sparks and Reno and within TRIC.

By 2037 and without the extension of USA Parkway, most of the area roadways would begin to experience congestion, and existing USA Parkway and US 95A would operate at a level of service (LOS) E and D (respectively). This would not meet NDOT's LOS goals for these two roadways. Out-of-direction travel and increased traffic volumes would contribute to the deterioration of service levels along these roadway segments. Improved connectivity between I-80 and US 50 is needed to provide additional north-south capacity and a more direct travel route to improve regional mobility. Additionally, a more direct north-south transportation route is needed to reduce system demand on I-80, US 95A, and US 50, which would extend the useful

life of the existing infrastructure and improve the efficiency of these roads as drivers would spend less time on congested roads.

Lyon County is primarily a bedroom community that provides affordable housing for a workforce that commutes to jobs outside of the County. Storey County, on the other hand, serves as an employment center with limited residential development because of steep topography and water supply constraints. Transportation improvements are needed to more efficiently link the supply of affordable housing in Lyon County to employment opportunities in Storey County and the larger region. Transportation infrastructure is also needed to support regional and national economic growth by increasing freight access and mobility.

4. SELECTED ALTERNATIVE

Depicted on Figure 2 and Figure 3, the alternative selected by FHWA and NDOT consists of three segments:

- Improving 6 miles of paved roadway along existing USA Parkway,
- Constructing 4 miles of roadway generally following an alignment that has already been graded, and
- Constructing 8.5 miles of new alignment to US 50 at Opal Avenue.

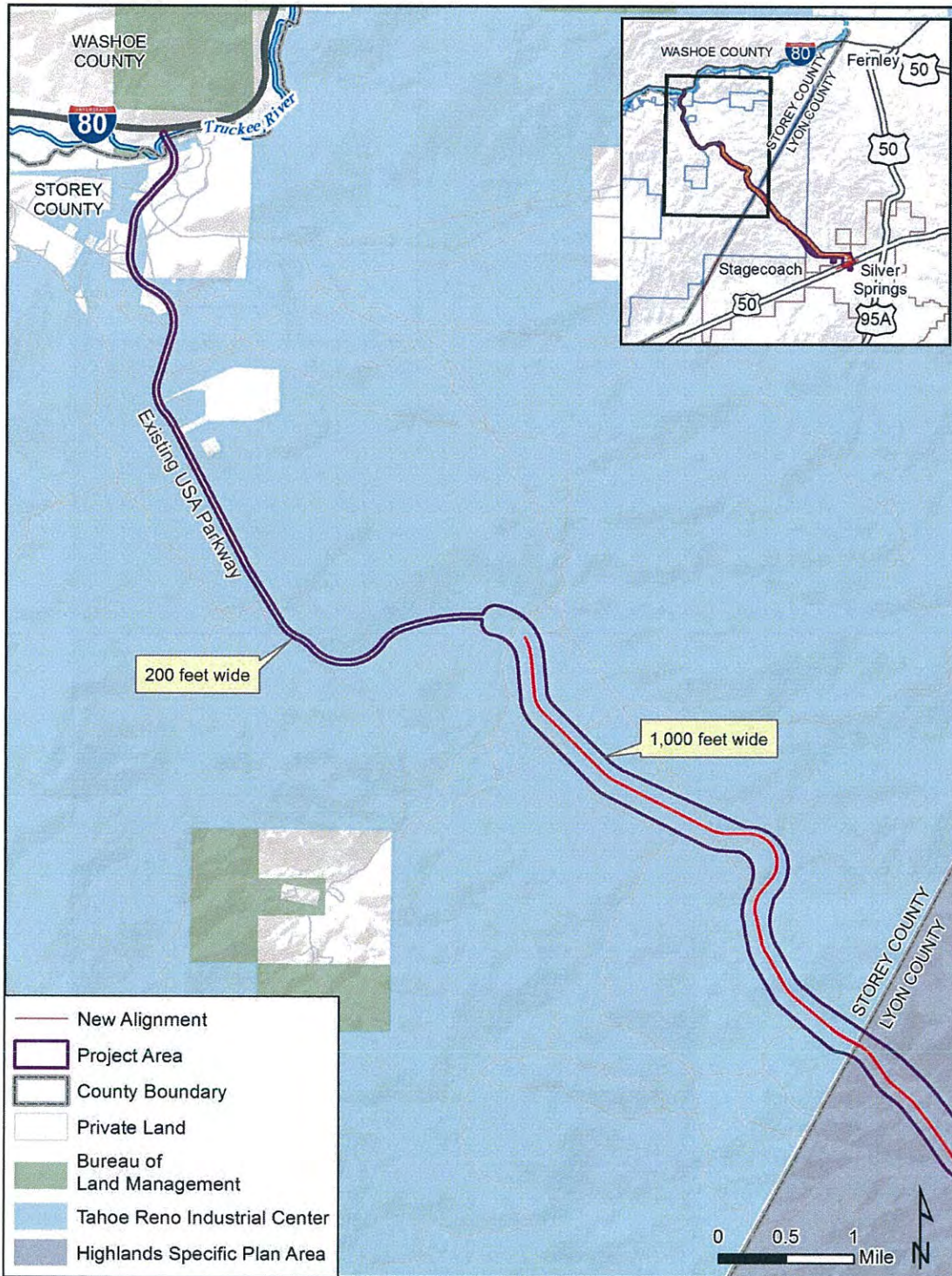
The Selected Alternative would address both the need for more efficient regional access and mobility and the need for transportation infrastructure to support existing and future land uses and economic growth. The following further details project elements for each of the listed segments.

Some portions of existing USA Parkway do not conform to NDOT or the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) design standards. Improvements needed to comply with standards would involve:

- Placing guardrail end terminals and new guardrail,
- Flattening roadside slopes within the clear zone,
- Moving culvert inlets out of the clear zone,
- Adjusting fire hydrant locations,
- Correcting sight distances, and
- Upsizing nine culverts and 10 channels adjacent to the road.

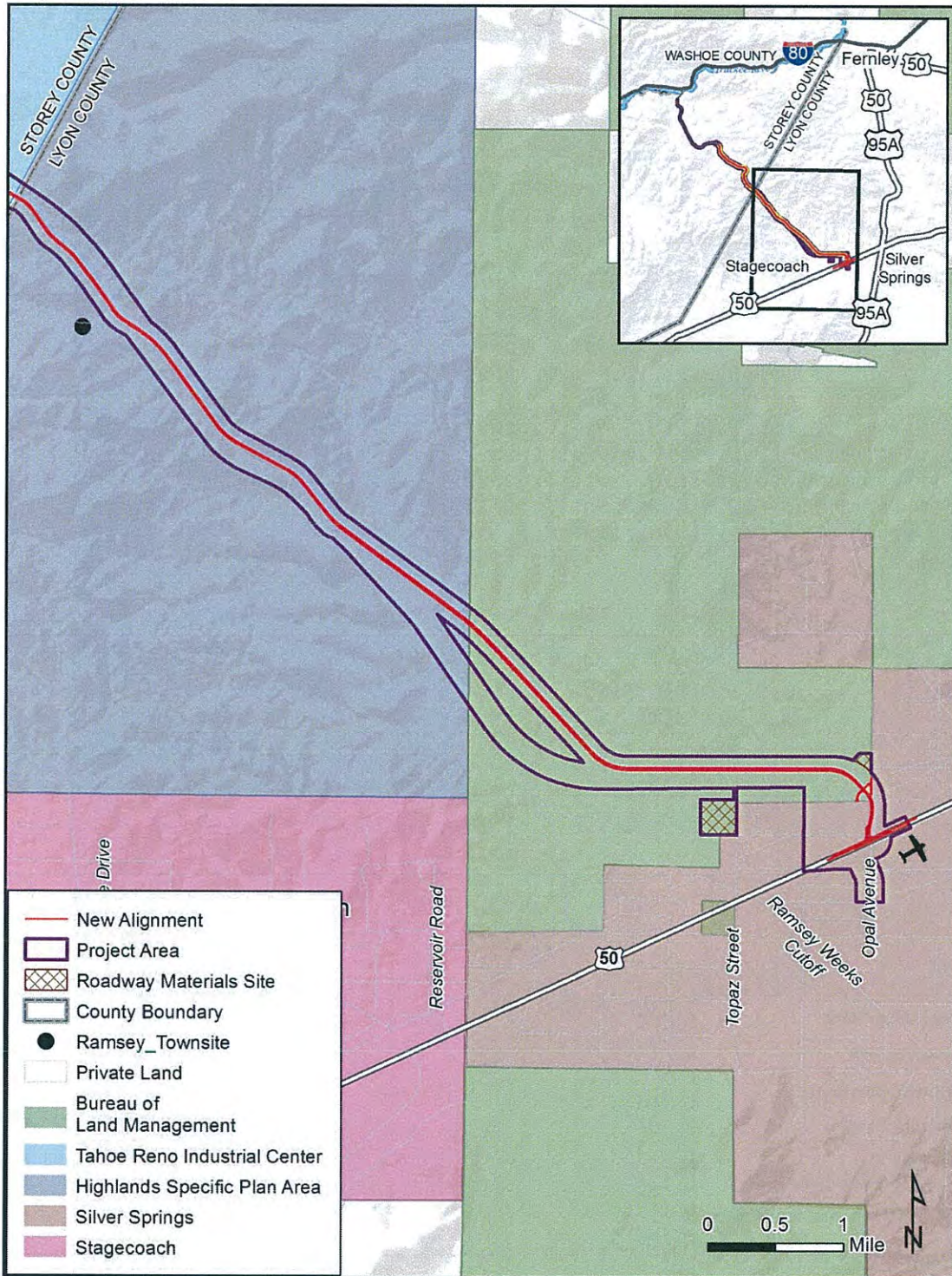
The Selected Alternative also involves the construction of 4 miles of roadway generally following an alignment that has already been graded within TRIC to the Storey/Lyon County line. Some adjustments to the existing graded alignment have been proposed to comply with NDOT standards.

Figure 2. Selected Alternative (Storey County)



Source: USA Parkway study team.

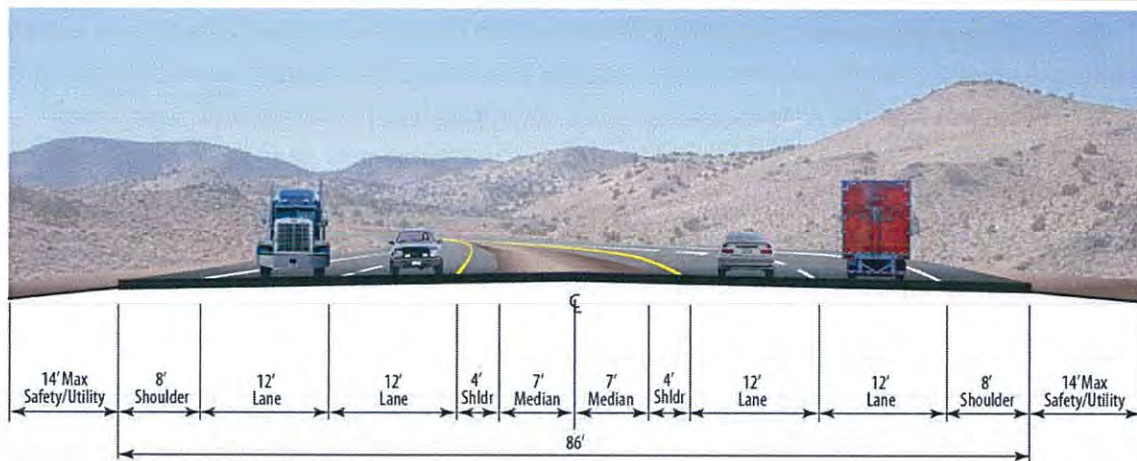
Figure 3. Selected Alternative (Lyon County)



Source: USA Parkway study team.

The Selected Alternative would include an 86-foot-wide typical section beginning where the existing pavement ends and continuing to US 50 at Opal Avenue for approximately 12.5 miles. (Four of these miles would be the previously graded section in the second segment, and 8.5 of these miles would be the new alignment in the third segment.) The typical section would have two travel lanes in each direction, 8-foot-wide outside shoulders, and a center median. The typical cross section represented on Figure 4 was developed to 1) meet current and future traffic demands, 2) satisfy NDOT and AASHTO design standards, and 3) minimize environmental impacts and overall costs. This typical section could be altered depending on topographical constraints. In the mountainous area, the use of barrier rails would eliminate the median and the need for recoverable side slopes. This design consideration would also reduce the overall footprint width and earthwork requirements. The 14-foot-wide safety/utility area shown on Figure 4 would meet clear zone design requirements and could accommodate future belowground utilities. The width of the clear zone would vary depending on topographic constraints and design speed.

Figure 4. Typical Cross Section



Source: USA Parkway study team.

Note: ' = foot or feet.

Two potential roadway materials source sites have been identified on 52 acres of undeveloped BLM land (see Figure 3).

Project drainage features would include limited curb and gutter, a median drainage channel, and some roadside channels. Roadside channels and cross culverts would accommodate existing drainage patterns, and culverts would be sized to accommodate existing stormwater flows across the new alignment at the southern end of the project near the community of Silver Springs. Rip rap would be installed in channels to slow runoff, reduce the potential for erosion, and allow infiltration. The design would also include slope armoring using geotextiles,

vegetation, soil cement, or other long-term soil stabilization methods to minimize the potential for erosion.

The EA evaluated two design options for the proposed terminus of USA Parkway at US 50. Initial construction would implement a signalized, at-grade, 3-legged intersection to allow for the continuous flow of eastbound traffic on US 50. A new deceleration lane on US 50 would accommodate left turns from eastbound US 50 to northbound USA Parkway. A new acceleration lane on US 50 would accommodate left turns from USA Parkway to eastbound US 50. The signal at USA Parkway and US 50 would only stop westbound US 50 traffic to provide for left-turn movements. Additionally, and in keeping with the access management recommendations made in the *US 50 East Corridor Study*, a grade-separated interchange was also evaluated in the EA. The interchange may be implemented later in time if/when traffic volumes increase and funds are available for construction of the improvement.

5. PROJECT AVOIDANCE, MINIMIZATION, AND MITIGATION MEASURES

Table 1 lists the measures that will be implemented during the project’s design or construction phases to avoid, reduce, or otherwise mitigate environmental impacts associated with the Selected Alternative. All noted measures are to comply with federal, state, and local laws/regulations. The following commitments are not subject to change or modification without prior written approval from FHWA. This list does not include any of FHWA’s permits, approvals, or reviews required for the Plans, Specifications, and Estimates; rights-of-way; contracts; or other project design and administrative aspects.

Table 1. Project Avoidance, Minimization, and Mitigation Measures

| Responsible Party | EA Page Ref# | Mitigation Category | Description |
|-------------------------|--------------|-----------------------------------|---|
| Construction Contractor | 3-13 | Biological Resources – Vegetation | Establish an Environmentally-Sensitive Area: A qualified botanist will clearly flag and/or fence the boundary of the Tiehm’s peppercress population to prevent access to this area. The boundary will remain in place and be maintained accordingly through the end of construction. |
| Construction Contractor | 3-13 | Biological Resources – Cacti | Salvage and Relocate Cactus Plants: Succulent plants with potential to be impacted by construction will be considered for salvage if the plant is currently in a healthy condition as determined by the Restoration Contractor. Any succulent that cannot be accessed safely due to steep slopes or rocky areas will not be salvaged. Succulents that will not be salvaged will be broken up and windrowed as vertical mulch. |

Table 1. Project Avoidance, Minimization, and Mitigation Measures

| Responsible Party | EA Page Ref# | Mitigation Category | Description |
|-------------------------|--------------|---|---|
| Construction Contractor | 3-13 | Biological Resources – Noxious Weeds | <p>Minimize and Revegetate Disturbed Areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Minimize the amount of disturbance to existing trees, shrubs, and vegetation, and limit the amount of time that disturbed areas remain non-vegetated. ▪ Revegetate disturbed areas with native grass and forb species following established Nevada Department of Transportation procedures. ▪ Use standard Nevada Department of Transportation best management practices for erosion control and to protect newly seeded slopes to control erosion and to promote the establishment of vegetation. ▪ Develop and implement a Noxious Weed Management Plan to prevent the establishment and spread of Nevada State listed noxious weeds per Nevada Revised Statute 555. |
| Construction Contractor | 3-14 | Biological Resources – Migratory Bird Species | <p>Adhere to Migratory Bird Nesting Season Restrictions: Construction will be conducted to avoid impacts to migratory birds that may be actively utilizing vegetation for nesting. When possible, vegetation removal is not to occur during the avian breeding season as defined by Nevada Department of Wildlife (February 1 to August 1). Raptors and owls may begin nesting as early as January. If vegetation removal must occur during avian breeding season, nesting surveys will be conducted by an experienced biologist at a maximum of 14 days prior to land disturbance. If nesting sites are found within the project limits, a Nevada Department of Transportation Environmental Services Biologist will be consulted to flag a suitable buffer area around the nest site. No disturbance will occur within the flagged avoidance area while the nest is occupied.</p> |
| Construction Contractor | 3-14 | Biological Resources – Wildlife and Estray Horses | <p>Install Exclusionary Wildlife Fencing: A permanent fence will be constructed to prevent wildlife from entering the right-of-way. The fence shall be constructed no less than 4 feet in height, with smooth wires on the top and bottom. Escape structures (e.g., earthen ramps) shall be installed to provide an exit for wildlife or livestock that enter the roadway.</p> |
| NDOT | 3-14 | Biological Resources – Wildlife and Estray Horses | <p>Install Wildlife Crossings: Up to two wildlife under-crossings will be installed where feasible to provide wildlife protection and habitat connectivity. The design and construction will allow wildlife passage across the roadway corridor. The dimensions and design characteristics of the crossing structure will accommodate the largest animals in the area.</p> |
| Construction Contractor | 3-14 | Biological Resources – Wildlife and Estray Horses | <p>Maintain Access to Watering Stations: The Construction Contractor will ensure wildlife is provided access to water sources during construction. These water sources should be located in proximity to the existing watering stations mapped on Figure 3-1 in Appendix F, Wildlife Technical Study. This may require installing wildlife crossings, as described above, to maintain access to existing watering stations or adding new water sources where access may be denied.</p> |
| Construction Contractor | 3-14 | Biological Resources – Wildlife | <p>Conduct Preconstruction Surveys for Bats: Prior to construction, a qualified biologist will conduct a pre-construction survey of the potential roosting sites for bats. If bats are detected, Nevada Department of Wildlife will be contacted for recommendations on appropriate measures to be taken to exclude bats such that they would not be harmed. These measures will be implemented prior to construction. If maternity roosts are identified that would be displaced by construction, Nevada Department of Wildlife will be consulted to determine whether artificial replacement roosts are to be installed in appropriate habitat nearby.</p> |

Table 1. Project Avoidance, Minimization, and Mitigation Measures

| Responsible Party | EA Page Ref# | Mitigation Category | Description |
|-------------------------|--------------|---------------------|---|
| NDOT | 3-24 | Water Resources | Consult with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and Obtain Clean Water Act Section 404 and 401 Permits: Once design is at level sufficient to determine project impacts and the type of permit required, Nevada Department of Transportation will complete the Preliminary Jurisdictional Determination process and then seek necessary permits from U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Nevada Department of Transportation will adhere to all terms and conditions of the Section 404 and 401 permits to ensure the project does not violate state and federal water quality standards. |
| Construction Contractor | 3-24 | Water Resources | <p>Implement Stormwater Best Management Practices: Temporary and permanent erosion control and stormwater best management practices will be implemented during construction per the Nevada Department of Transportation water quality manuals. Specific best management practices are incorporated into the project plans during preliminary and final design. Nevada Department of Transportation's Hydraulics Section, with support from other divisions, is responsible for incorporating the permanent BMPs into the design. Possible temporary and permanent best management practices are identified in the Storm Water Management Program manual. These measures have been selected to achieve pollutant load reductions through sound engineering judgment, published best management practice studies, and experience with other municipal separate storm sewer system stormwater programs. Best management practices that may be selected for this project include, but are not limited to:</p> <p>Permanent Best Management Practices</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Preservation of existing vegetation to the extent possible ▪ Installation of hydraulically stable ditches, berms, and swales as needed ▪ Re-vegetation, mulching, and slope roughening in disturbed areas to reduce erosion ▪ Infiltration basins that allow pollutants to settle ▪ Installation of rip rap to slow runoff, reduce the potential for erosion, and allow for infiltration ▪ Slope armoring using geotextiles, vegetation, soil cement, or other long-term soil stabilization methods to minimize the potential for erosion <p>Temporary Best Management Practices</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Street sweeping and vacuuming during construction ▪ Storm drain inlet protection ▪ Fiber rolls, silt fences, and gravel bag berms ▪ Stockpile and construction site management ▪ Wind erosion control and application of soil stabilizer ▪ Hydroseeding |
| Construction Contractor | 3-25 | Water Resources | Obtain Required Stormwater Permits: As part of the development of best management practices for the project, the Construction Contractor will file a Notice of Intent with the Nevada Division of Environmental Protection Bureau of Water Pollution Control to obtain coverage under the General Permit for Stormwater Discharges Associated with Construction Activity (NVR100000). |

Table 1. Project Avoidance, Minimization, and Mitigation Measures

| Responsible Party | EA Page Ref# | Mitigation Category | Description |
|-------------------------|--------------|---------------------|--|
| Construction Contractor | 3-25 | Water Resources | Prepare a Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan: A Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan will be developed before the Notice of Intent is submitted. The Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan will outline temporary and permanent, erosion, and sediment controls (see example best management practices above); will locate stormwater discharge points; and will describe best management practices to be implemented to prevent or reduce stormwater pollutant discharge associated with construction activities to the maximum extent practical. The Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan will include a demonstration that the best management practices selected for implementation will be sufficient to ensure that the discharges will not cause or contribute to an exceedance of applicable State water quality standards. |
| NDOT | 3-25 | Water Resources | Coordinate with Local Agencies: As part of final design, Nevada Department of Transportation will coordinate with local agencies, municipalities, and the Pyramid Lake Paiute Tribe regarding permanent water quality features. |
| NDOT | 3-25 | Water Resources | Drainage: During final design, Nevada Department of Transportation will complete a two-dimensional hydraulic model to more fully understand potential impacts to adjacent properties and to develop options to mitigate potential flooding of adjacent properties. This may include reducing the impact through design or acquiring additional right-of-way or easements. |
| NDOT | 3-25 | Water Resources | Obtain Appropriate Water Use Waivers: Nevada Department of Transportation will obtain a waiver to use water for highway construction in the case where an existing well will be used, or a new well drilled, to provide construction water as required by NAC 534. |
| Construction Contractor | 3-33 | Construction Noise | Reduce Construction Noise: Construction noise minimization measures and best management practices for stationary and mobile equipment (e.g., placement, hours of operation, noise-level limits, or proper maintenance of equipment) are to be addressed in the contract documents, as needed. |
| NDOT | 3-50 | Visual Resources | Design Retaining Wall Aesthetic: Nevada Department of Transportation will design retaining walls to blend into the surrounding environment to the extent possible. This will be accomplished by selecting proper color and material type and texture in accordance with Nevada Department of Transportation landscape and aesthetic policies. |
| NDOT | 3-50 | Visual Resources | Minimize Cut and Fill Areas: Nevada Department of Transportation will minimize cut and fill areas where practical and design these areas to blend in with the surrounding environment to minimize visual impacts. |
| Construction Contractor | 3-50 | Visual Resources | Establish Clearing Limits: The clearing limits shall be staked by the Construction Contractor for approval by the Nevada Department of Transportation Engineer prior to the start of clearing. Where possible, the limits of clearing will be irregular, and straight clearing lines will be avoided by varying the width of the area to be cleared or by leaving selected clumps of vegetation near the edge of the clearing limit. |
| Construction Contractor | 3-50 | Visual Resources | Prepare New Slope: The Construction Contractor will round and blend new slopes to mimic the existing contours and to highlight natural formations. |

Table 1. Project Avoidance, Minimization, and Mitigation Measures

| Responsible Party | EA Page Ref# | Mitigation Category | Description |
|-------------------|--------------|---|--|
| NDOT | 3-55 | Right-of-Way, Acquisition, and Relocation Impacts | Any right-of-way acquisition will comply with Section 205(a) of the Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisitions Policies Act of 1970, as amended. The purpose of the Uniform Act is to provide uniform and equitable treatment of all persons displaced from their homes, businesses, or farms by establishing criteria for proper acquisition and relocation benefit impacts. Prior to acquiring the Letter of Consent for the right-of-way from BLM, FHWA/NDOT will address valid claim holders that may have located (established) active claims within the final Build Alternative alignment since this analysis was completed. FHWA/NDOT will obtain permission from claim holders to account for any such active claims within the right-of-way. |

6. COORDINATION

Public involvement and agency coordination have been conducted throughout the EA development process. Activities have included an agency and public scoping period, public information meetings, a public hearing, and the distribution of a range of outreach materials. The project’s public involvement and agency coordination effort was designed to be inclusive, comprehensive, and transparent. NDOT considered agency and public input during the alternative development process and when selecting the Selected Alternative.

The EA was approved for circulation on October 21, 2014, and a Location/Design Public Hearing was conducted on November 5, 2014, in the community of Silver Springs. At least 295 members of the general public were in attendance. Table 2 lists the comments received during the public comment period and the project team’s responses to those comments. Table 3 summarizes the comments that NDOT did not directly address at the Location/Design Public Hearing. Table 3 also lists the project team’s response to each comment. Appendix A contains a complete transcript of the Public Hearing (which includes public comments and project team responses during the Public Hearing). Of note, one commenter submitted a series of comments during the public comment period, and he reiterated his comments verbatim during the Public Hearing. As such, his comments are not repeated in Table 3, but have been included in the transcript for the Public Hearing.

Table 2. Comments and Responses Received During the Public Comment Period

| Comment | Response |
|--|--|
| <p>I am a property owner in both the Stagecoach and Silver Springs area. I support the location of Opal Avenue to connect Hwy 50. We are all looking forward to growth in this area as we were hit pretty hard with property values during our recession. The Opal location will serve both Hwy 50 going east or west and a direct link to Alt 95 going south. I'm sure the location will additionally benefit the Silver Springs Airport. My only concern in the area are the wild horse herds that frequent the north side of Hwy 50. As long as measures are taken to address the issue of horse related accidents that could occur, then I fully support this proposal.</p> | <p>In the Biological Resources section of the EA (Section 3.3), NDOT has committed to wildlife exclusionary fencing and two wildlife crossings sized to accommodate stray horses located in the study area. These measures will promote habitat connectivity, provide access to existing water sources, and reduce the potential for wildlife collisions. Section 3.3 of the EA includes additional information concerning this NDOT commitment.</p> |
| <p>As well as the fencing for the animals, you should be putting in animal underpasses. The wild horses, coyotes, etc., will find a way around or over the fencing if what they need is on the other side. Animal underpasses will keep the open range open and will keep both people and wildlife safe. We must protect both!</p> | |
| <p>I heard Meg on the news this morning talking about installing fences so wild horses won't be crossing the parkway. As a suggestion, not sure if installing a "tunnel" under the road, much like the one in Washoe Valley for so many years, that allowed for animals to pass under 395 vs. fencing them in. Perhaps this is already thought out, but wanted to suggest it in any event.</p> | |
| <p>We are writing this letter as concerned residents and to also ensure safety and prevention of highway accidents/deaths. We need to be proactive in securing the highway from wild life entering on our roadways. We are actively building on a known wild horse land. Please ensure to implement plans for fencing, alternative water source, and underpasses so our wildlife can cross under the highways/and to keep them from roaming onto roadways potentially causing fatal accidents. I urge you to help make our Nevada roadways as safe as possible for our friends/families & beautiful wildlife in Nevada -who will be out or near roads daily at highway speed levels.</p> | |
| <p>The proposed USA Parkway connection is an excellent idea and much needed in the area. Consideration must be given to all wildlife, including wild horses which roam the area. Installation of wildlife crossings and fencing will help minimize accidents with wildlife and wild horses, where traffic will become very busy.</p> | |

Table 2. Comments and Responses Received During the Public Comment Period

| Comment | Response |
|---|--|
| <p>With all the success that has been proven in Europe, why has overpasses and/or underpasses already part of the design for the wild horses?</p> | <p>In the Biological Resources section of the EA (Section 3.3), NDOT has committed to wildlife exclusionary fencing and two wildlife crossings sized to accommodate stray horses located in the study area. The measures have been recommended based on prior studies that document the effectiveness of wildlife crossings for promoting habitat connectivity, providing access to existing water sources, and reducing the potential for wildlife collisions. Section 3.3 of the EA includes additional information concerning this NDOT commitment. Additional information about wildlife crossings can be found at: https://www.nevadadot.com/safety/improvements/overpass.aspx</p> |
| <p>Concerned about an alternative to Apache Road.</p> | <p>As shown on Figure 2-1 of the EA, NDOT considered an Apache Drive alternative. The alternative was dismissed based on the reasons described in Table 2-1 of the EA.</p> |
| <p>The entire system should be completed from intersection with Highway 50 to 95A along Ramsey Weeks cut-off.</p> | <p>Discussed in Section 2.2 of the EA, NDOT did not carry forward the option to extend USA Parkway south of US 50, as suggested by a public comment, because the project's logical terminus would be at US 50. Traffic modeling completed for the project indicates that the 2037 traffic demand south of US 50 would not warrant a new state highway. Additionally, NDOT considered, but ultimately eliminated, a terminus at Ramsey Weeks because the alternative was not consistent with the adopted Lyon County Comprehensive Plan.^a The County land use plan for the development of Silver Springs assumes development would occur around the USA Parkway terminus at Opal Avenue. Additionally, in public meetings conducted by Lyon County between 2005 and 2009, the public opposed a terminus at Ramsey Weeks because of expressed concerns regarding conflicts between high-volume, high-speed traffic—particularly semi-truck traffic—adjacent to pedestrian intensive uses (e.g., adjacent to a park and elementary, middle, and high schools). Table 2-1 of the EA provides additional information on alternatives considered but eliminated from further study.</p> |
| <p>Have you considered placing a round about at the intersection of 95A and Highway 50? I think this would alleviate the concern of many residents about large trucks making a sharp right hand turn from eastbound 50 to southbound 95A. Thus making the turn more gradual.</p> <p>If you have a light instead of a roundabout, could you incorporate a non-stop right turn lane from Fernley going west onto Highway 50? If you have a roundabout, make it large enough that semis can easily go through it and not over the top of it like they do on Edmunds.</p> | <p>The roundabout at US 95A and US 50 is outside the scope of this EA.</p> |

Table 2. Comments and Responses Received During the Public Comment Period

| Comment | Response |
|---|---|
| <p>If USA Parkway (SR 439) drops into Silver Springs area at Opal, the traffic headed in the Yerington direction will try to take the Ramsey cut-off. My concern is that it cannot handle that amount of traffic. How will you route traffic back to the Highway 95A south?</p> | <p>NDOT will prepare a signage plan during the project's final design phase to direct traffic to other state routes. Additionally, NDOT will coordinate any additional signage needs on the Ramsey Weeks Cutoff with Lyon County, the owner of the route.</p> |
| <p>Why not move the USA Parkway at Opal and US 50 in Silver Springs 500 feet to the west in between Opal and Onyx? And that way not bother the Opal Avenue throughway or the people who live off of North Opal Avenue. Why not go down Reservoir Road less impact on Opal Avenue people?</p> | <p>NDOT considered, but eliminated, both of the noted alternatives during the alternatives development and refinement process. The rationale for eliminating the Reservoir Road alternative is documented in Table 2-1 of the EA. Moving the alignment between Opal Avenue and Onyx Street was considered as a design refinement to the Preferred Alternative. However, in the end, the alternative was rejected because of cost, because it would fragment private parcels, and because it was less consistent with the alignment in the adopted LCCMP.^a</p> |
| <p>I own an active trucking company operating long haul trucks from the Opal Avenue property. A "T" intersection preventing access to Opal Avenue southbound to truck/car traffic from the new highway will create a hardship to my business operation. I would appreciate consideration of other options that do not restrict access to my business.</p> | <p>Access to the private parcels located south of the terminus of USA Parkway at US 50 would be limited to right-in, right-out movements; however, the parcels would still be accessible. A full range of movements would be permissible at Onyx Street approximately 0.5 mile west of Opal Avenue that connects to Prospect Avenue, which connects back to Opal Avenue. This type of access management is consistent with NDOT's <i>US 50 East Corridor Study</i> that provided recommendations to manage the long-term operational efficiency of US 50.^b</p> |
| <p>I talked with the team last night at SSHS about my parcel near the Ramsey Mine. You said you could send me details showing location of the hwy. route in relation to my parcel lines.</p> | <p>The project team provided a map to the owner that depicted the owner's parcel within the larger project study area. Based on this information, a portion of the affected parcel would be within the study area. However, based on the project's preliminary design, the proposed roadway would not directly affect the parcel. While the parcel would be close to the preliminary alignment, the proposed roadway and its associated earthwork would occur west of the parcel. As noted during the Public Hearing, the project would undergo final design and be issued for construction over the next 3 years. During this time, some modifications to the preliminary design could occur within the study area. NDOT will continue to notify and work with property owners throughout the design and right-of-way process.</p> |

Table 2. Comments and Responses Received During the Public Comment Period

| Comment | Response |
|---|---|
| <p>I own parcel #021-411-002 within the Highlands near the Ramsey mine. Jennifer Basset-Hales was able to provide a map showing proximity of my parcel lines and the proposed project. She copied you with an e-mail on or about 11-6-14. In her note to me she stated that some changes to the preliminary design could occur within the study area before the final design is released. Could you tell me when the final design is scheduled to be released?</p> | <p>The project will not follow NDOT's standard design-bid-build process, where NDOT finalizes project design and then accepts bids for project construction. Instead, NDOT will deliver the project via the design-build approach, which is an alternative project delivery method that combines both design and construction under one contract. NDOT will select a design-builder to perform the design, construction engineering, and construction of the project. The design-builder will finalize portions of the design and then issue each portion for construction. The selected design-builder will work with NDOT to determine which portions of the design would initially be finalized and constructed. NDOT is working to select a design-builder by the end of 2015, with NDOT anticipating that construction would be completed by 2018.</p> |
| <p>Based on the information I gleaned from the local news media, the main focus about the proposed route of the USA Parkway was directed toward the safety of the wild horse population in the area of the future highway. This is laudable and is a valid concern, however there is another concern that I feel [may] have been overlooked at the meeting. My family and I lived in Silver Springs from the period of 1963 to 1969. Our driveway was Opal St. At the time we lived there, there were no other homes in the area. Our former home is still there and is currently accessed by Opal St. The only other structure within a mile of us was a concrete building right next to Highway 50. Let me get right to the point. During the 6 years we lived the 2 tenths of a mile from Highway 50 we experienced 2 significant flash floods that wiped out a small bridge we had built to cross a dry stream bed near Highway 50. These floods originated in Ramsey Canyon which is a few miles west of Opal St. I bring this to your attention so that your dept. (if it isn't already) is aware of the possibility of damage that could be sustained to the future highway. Just thought this information might be helpful. If there are any questions you may have regarding the events that transpired while we lived in Silver Springs, I would be most happy to help.</p> | <p>Section 3.4 of the EA lists the drainage studies that NDOT has completed during the project's preliminary design phase. NDOT has modeled potential runoff in the noted location and has identified a flooding potential for the location. Detailed in Section 3.4 of the EA, NDOT will complete a two-dimensional hydraulic model during final design to better understand potential impacts to adjacent properties and to more fully develop options to mitigate potential flooding of adjacent properties. This may include reducing the impact through design or acquiring additional right-of-way or easements.</p> |
| <p>1. Pedro mentioned a present on-going wildlife study. Who is doing the study? Please provide information. 2. What are projected details for the wildlife crossings?</p> | <p>In order to maintain wildlife permeability across USA Parkway and the Virginia Range, NDOT must accurately predict where animals are likely to cross the road and where their movement would be impeded across the landscape. NDOT is in the process of developing an agreement with a consulting firm with wildlife crossing expertise to create and evaluate a series of spatial models that would help determine the most appropriate locations for the wildlife crossings. The accelerated project schedule presents time constraints for the type of analysis that can realistically be completed, and NDOT will rely heavily on the firm's experience in roadway ecology to inform the study's conclusions and the ultimate location of the wildlife crossings.</p> |

Table 2. Comments and Responses Received During the Public Comment Period

| Comment | Response |
|---|--|
| <p>I was not aware of this Nov. 5th meeting. Found out about it after the fact. Would like to be on a mailing list or email list for any and all meetings in Silver Springs. How was it advertised? Or noticed to the Residents of Silver Springs?</p> | <p>NDOT has added the commenter to the mailing list. Notices for the meeting included 10 advertisements in the Reno Gazette Journal, Nevada Appeal, and Lahontan Valley News between October 21 and November 5. Notice also involved distribution of approximately 900 postcards to addresses located within 0.5 mile of the project alignment and postings in the Dayton, Fernley, and Silver Stage Branch libraries.</p> |
| <p>As a member of the northern Nevada community, I fully support this project and agree with the recommendations of this environmental assessment. I believe that the impacts of the project have been successfully mitigated and that this project is of great importance to the State of Nevada.</p> | <p>Comment noted. Thank you for your support.</p> |
| <p>We discussed this project and the effects on EP Minerals at the public meeting a few weeks ago. EP is very supportive of the planned expansion of USA Parkway but are concerned about safety aspects with the increased traffic. Please consider the below as EP's comments to the USA Parkway Environmental Assessment.</p> <p>EP Minerals has been at the Clark Station site since 1945, prior to the I-80 installation and the formation of the industrial park and is currently accessed off of USA Parkway. The plant is supplied ore both locally on internal EP roads and over the road ore trucks from Lovelock. Additionally there are a number of over the road haulers that access the plant on a daily basis.</p> <p>EP is concerned that the additional traffic on USA Parkway will exacerbate current unsafe conditions at the I-80 interchange and at the Clark Station Road intersection. EP has conducted sampling on the 117' ore trucks that turn left onto Clark Station Road which indicate that it can take up to 22 seconds to clear USA Parkway. USA Parkway traffic headed toward I-80 at the 45 mph speed limit only has a line of sight of approximately 16 seconds approaching Clark Station Road. Obviously, much of the traffic is traveling substantially faster than the speed limit. At high traffic times, it can take these trucks and over the road haulers up to 15 minutes to make this left turn. It is very unsafe for these trucks and other USA Parkway traffic, for these trucks to be parked in the turn lane for any period of time since they greatly reduce visibility, impede the flow of traffic and heighten the risk of collision.</p> <p>EP is very supportive of the road expansion and the new Tesla Facility. We believe that it is in the best interest of everyone if traffic controls are added to this project to specifically address the concern described above.</p> <p>EP Minerals would like to be contacted to discuss the traffic issues in more detail.</p> | <p>NDOT appreciates being notified of the concerns raised by EP Minerals. This issue requires additional engineering design work, and NDOT will work individually with this property owner throughout the design process to address potential safety concerns.</p> |

Table 2. Comments and Responses Received During the Public Comment Period

| Comment | Response |
|--|--|
| <p>The RSIC is a federally recognized tribe that represents Washoe, Paiute and Shoshone members and descendants. It is of grave concern that the RSIC was excluded from the consultation process regarding the USA Parkway Project; especially when the RSIC is notified on other projects within the same geographical area.</p> <p>Although a map isn't provided that identifies the location of cultural resources identified as part of this project, there is a map that identifies the project area and there is a complete description of the survey methods and there is a complete description of the known resources and a site number. The RSIC has great concern when a federal and state agency is providing the public with sites and descriptions of Native American Cultural Resource sites. The RSIC is requesting that sensitive Native American Cultural Resources not be announced or published for public viewing by NDOT and FHWA.</p> | <p>The Reno-Sparks Indian Colony (RSIC) was not included in Government-to-Government consultations with FHWA based on RSIC's previously stated desire to only be consulted on FHWA projects occurring within Washoe County. This "practice" has been adhered to by FHWA for nearly 8 years. Because the project is located in Storey and Lyon counties, FHWA satisfied its obligation to identify and consult with Native American tribes for this project by inviting the Fallon Paiute-Shoshone Tribe, Pyramid Lake Paiute Tribe, Walker River Paiute Tribe, and the Yerington Paiute Tribe into Government-to-Government consultations. Section 106 regulations allow a federally recognized tribe or interested party to contact the agency official and identify themselves with a request to be added as a consulting party [36 CFR 800.3(f)(2) and (3)]. Neither FHWA nor NDOT were contacted in regards to this project with such a request by RSIC. FHWA and NDOT are willing to develop a formal agreement with RSIC outlining when RSIC would prefer to be involved in future FHWA project Government-to-Government consultations.</p> <p>The presentation of the cultural resource information in the EA conforms to FHWA/NDOT standard practice of presenting enough information in a document to inform the agency and public without having to provide sensitive cultural resource documents for their consideration. RSIC's claim can be said about any Environmental Assessment or Environmental Impact Statement where an alignment or project area is depicted and there is a discussion of cultural resources. It can only be inferred by the reader that those cultural resources discussed are located in direct association with the alignment or project area.</p> <p>In accordance with Section 304 of the National Historic Preservation Act, FHWA and NDOT believe the minimal disclosure in the EA did not "cause a significant invasion of privacy; risk harm to the historic resources; or impede the use of a traditional religious site by practitioners." FHWA and NDOT understand and take very seriously our responsibilities for preserving Nevada's rich cultural history, while providing safe and reliable transportation projects.</p> |

Table 2. Comments and Responses Received During the Public Comment Period

| Comment | Response |
|--|--|
| <p><i>The following includes a number of comments submitted by one commenter, and represents NDOT response to each of the subparts within the commenter's larger comment.</i></p> | |
| <p>1. The Nevada Department of Transportation does an excellent job of design and maintenance of the roadway system within the State, and should be commended for these efforts.</p> | <p>Comment noted. Thank you for your support.</p> |
| <p>2. Is there a published flow chart showing the steps in the process of the provision of public transportation facilities? If so, where is it, if not why is it not available? This may be a convoluted process, given the nature of the relationship of NDOT to FHWA and all the associated rules, regulations and laws pertaining to the promulgation of the documents, including, but not limited to, environmental assessment, project design, and construction/contract documents. If there is none, would the production of a publically available document such as this assist in the understanding of the document from a public perspective? If not, why not?</p> | <p>Section 6 of NDOT's <i>Road Design Guide</i> provides a narrative of each step in the project development process.^c The guide is available at: https://nevadadot.com/About_NDOT/NDOT_Divisions/Engineering/Design/Design_Division_-_Road_Design_Guide.aspx</p> |
| <p>3. What is the process that prioritizes projects? Is there a prioritized list? If so where is it? If there isn't one, why not? Since these are tax dollars that are being spent should not transparency be a hallmark of such governmental decisions? If not, why not?</p> | <p>Transportation planning priorities are set through the statewide Transportation System Projects document, which includes the State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP), Annual Work Plan, Long Range Element, and Short Range Element. The complete process used to develop the <i>FY 2015-2024 Transportation System Projects</i> is described in the Process Section of the document, which is available at: https://www.nevadadot.com/About_NDOT/NDOT_Divisions/Planning/Program_Development/Statewide_Transportation_Improvement_Program.aspx.</p> <p>The document is updated annually and completed in compliance with Title 23 of the Federal-Aid Highway Act and Nevada Revised Statutes (NRS) 408.203. Updates account for input from federal, state, and local governments; regional transportation commissions; and metropolitan planning organizations so that funding is available for needed transportation improvements throughout Nevada.^d</p> |
| <p>4. Is how long a project has been proposed, reviewed, and planned for have any bearing on its priority in the list of projects? If not, why not? What are the published criteria that are used to determine the priority of a project? Is a point system applied to project selection? Who makes the project selection? Is there an annual review of projects? Are these projects submitted to the FHWA? If so, for what reason? Are these reports available to the public? If not, why not?</p> | <p>The project prioritization process does not consider the length of time a project has been proposed. A highway prioritization analysis is completed annually and considers current and future use and the cost-effectiveness of various types of capital improvements, arterial widening, and new construction projects. Locally funded street and highway projects are determined by the local governments and are included in the Regional Transportation Improvement Program when funding is considered secure and the project is of regional significance.^d More specific information on project prioritization can be found in the <i>FY 2015-2024 Transportation System Projects</i>, available on NDOT's website at the link noted in the previous response.</p> |

Table 2. Comments and Responses Received During the Public Comment Period

| Comment | Response |
|--|--|
| <p>5. Has there been any consideration given to upgrading the intersection of U.S. 50 and I--580, to a grade separated intersection given the increased traffic of the proposed project at that intersection? If not, why not?</p> | <p>Traffic projections completed by NDOT as part of the project show that USA Parkway would add less than 10 peak-hour vehicles to the proposed intersection of US 50 and I-580 in 2017 (opening year), and less than 50 peak-hour vehicles to the same intersection in year 2035. This minimal impact would not affect the operation of the proposed US 50 and I-580 intersection; and therefore, the proposed intersection would not need to be upgraded.</p> <p>The proposed interim at-grade intersection to be built at the I-580/US 50 junction in Carson City was found to operate at level of service (LOS) D or better until the 2030 traffic projections are realized. These traffic projections included regional traffic inputs into the analysis. Building an at-grade intersection now saves the tax payers approximately \$25 million today, while still having an efficient operational facility that connects the existing freeway to its southern terminus and relieves Fairview Drive of traffic congestion including heavy trucks. Once traffic demands are met (currently projected to be 2030) the I-580/US 50 interchange will be constructed to complete the Carson Freeway Project.</p> |
| <p>6. Will there be any provision for carpool, vanpool, or bus lanes along the proposed route, either now or in the future? If not, why not? Any provision for bicycle lanes? If not, why not?</p> | <p>The project does not include transit only or high occupancy vehicle (HOV) lanes because traffic volumes would not warrant these considerations. According to FHWA guidance, "The primary purpose of an HOV lane is to increase the total number of people moved through a congested corridor by offering two kinds of incentives: a savings in travel time and a reliable and predictable travel time. These facilities are most appropriate and are most needed in corridors with high levels of travel demand and traffic congestion."⁴ USA Parkway would not be a congested corridor, and therefore, HOV designations would not be effective used on this roadway.</p> <p>NDOT has not proposed dedicated bicycle lanes because the cost of establishing the bicycle lanes would be excessively disproportionate to the need or the probable use by the limited population along the corridor. NDOT determined this in accordance with the U.S. Department of Transportation's recommended approach within its <i>Accommodating Bicycle and Pedestrian Travel</i>.⁹ Demand for bicycle use along the proposed roadway would be low because of the incompatibility of the surrounding land uses (undeveloped/rural and industrial) for bicycle use and because of the steep terrain. However, the proposed roadway would have wide enough outside shoulder that bicyclists could use the roadway if needed.</p> |
| <p>7. Is there any provision for wildlife passages along the proposed ROW? Do these include provision for wild horses? If not why not for both questions?</p> | <p>In the Biological Resources section of the EA (Section 3.3), NDOT has committed to wildlife exclusionary fencing and two wildlife crossings sized to accommodate stray horses located in the study area. These measures will promote habitat connectivity, provide access to existing water sources, and reduce the potential for wildlife collisions. Section 3.3 of the EA includes additional information concerning this NDOT commitment.</p> |

Table 2. Comments and Responses Received During the Public Comment Period

| Comment | Response |
|---|---|
| <p>8. Were funds for this \$70M project re---programmed from other proposed projects? If so, which ones? Was one of them the grade separation at U.S. 50 and South Carson Street?</p> <p>9. Was this project given a higher priority due to impacts of the Tesla Battery Plant? IF so, why specifically? Trips per day? Increased demand on existing facilities? If so, which ones?</p> | <p>Transportation funding priorities are set through the long-range transportation planning process, and the State Transportation Board approves expenditures during monthly public meetings. NDOT's responsibility is to implement the program defined by the State Transportation Board.</p> <p>Project funding for construction was accelerated at the State Transportation Board Meeting held on October 13, 2014. According to the meeting minutes, the Board decided to expedite funding to "support regional economic development," which was related to Tesla's announcement on the location of its Gigafactory. Additional details on project funding can be found in the meeting minutes available at: https://www.nevadadot.com/uploadedFiles/NDOT/About_NDOT/Board_of_Directors/BoardPacket_2014_10_13.pdf.</p> <p>The project would not delay the grade separation projects at US 50 and South Carson Street, but the project could defer seven 3R projects (i.e., resurfacing, restoration, and rehabilitation projects) programmed for 2016 and 2017. This would include two projects on US 50, three projects on I-80, and one project on US 395.</p> |
| <p>10. Was there an origin and destination study done for this proposed project? If so, what was the vehicle split at the junction of the USA Parkway and US 50? Are there any plans for improvements to Hwy 50, given the increased traffic? If not, why not? If so, what are they?</p> | <p>Several traffic studies were completed for the project and are available at: http://www.nevadadot.com/Projects_and_Programs/Road_Projects/USA_Pkwy_Reports.aspx</p> <p>The studies show that US 50 operates at level of service (LOS) B west of US 95A and LOS C east of US 95A under both the build and no-build scenarios. The intersection of USA Parkway and US 50 would operate at an acceptable LOS in both the opening (2017) and future design year (2035). Table 2-2 and Table 2-3 of the EA summarizes this information. Typically, the more direct travel route would result in reduced travel times and reduced vehicle miles traveled. (Section 2.4.2 of the EA expands on the traffic benefits for the project's Build Alternative.) No additional improvements to US 50 would be necessary, beyond improvements already planned by NDOT.</p> |
| <p>A. I am in favor of the connector.</p> | <p>Comment noted. Thank you for your support.</p> |

Table 2. Comments and Responses Received During the Public Comment Period

| Comment | Response |
|---|---|
| <p>B. This is to verify that there is sufficient acquired ROW for a grade---separated interchange at the proposed junction of HWY 50 and the USA Parkway.</p> | <p>Traffic studies complete for the project conclude that an at-grade intersection would operate at an acceptable LOS in the future design year (2035). Therefore, right-of-way purchased for the project would accommodate the improvements needed to serve projected 2035 traffic levels.</p> <p>The Nevada Property Owner's Bill of Rights Amendment, also known as PISTOL (People's Initiative to Stop the Taking of Our Land) is a constitutional amendment approved by Nevada voters in 2008. This amendment dictates private land acquired for public use is to be used within 5 years of acquisition. This constitutional amendment forces NDOT to acquire only property needed for transportation improvement warranted in the present, and not for potential future transportation needs.</p> |
| <p>C. Will there be a parking lot near the junction of HWY 50 and the USA Parkway for commuters/van and car pools similar to the one currently in use just west of the junction of HWY 50 and South Carson Street? If not why not?</p> | <p>Park-and-ride lots are currently not planned at the US 50 and USA Parkway intersection because traffic volumes do not warrant this type of facility. However, this type of facility could be warranted at a future date.</p> |
| <p>D. In the presentation made by the Project Manager at the Public hearing on 11/5/14 it was stated that there were no significant environmental impacts. The on---line project documents state there will be 500,000 cubic yards of excess fill. What is the definition of "significant" and why isn't 500,000 cubic yards of excess fill considered "significant"?</p> | <p>The EA based its impact determination on the following conclusion from Table 3-1. "No unique geologic conditions have been identified in the project area. A complete geotechnical field exploration with subsurface borings has been completed to document site conditions and inform design and construction recommendations. Preliminary cut and fill estimates indicate approximately 1.7 million cubic yards of material would be excavated for the Build Alternative. Excavation and fill would mostly occur in the mountainous area near the Storey/Lyon County line. Excavated material would be used for fills within the project area to the extent possible. Minimal import or export of material outside of the project area is anticipated. Material excavated from the right-of-way on BLM land would be incorporated into the project or would be disposed in accordance with BLM regulations. Two potential roadway materials source sites have been identified and are included in the project area."</p> <p>The Final Field Alternatives Review Report discusses 500,000 cubic yards of excess material, but the report states that the excess material would be used to offset a shortage at another location within the proposed alignment. The report also established that "it is likely, however, that further profile refinements on the new alignment section will reduce cut/fill difference."</p> <p>While the project would require a substantial amount of excavation and grading, this would not be considered a significant impact because the project would not affect a unique geological setting. NDOT also anticipates that cut and fill requirements would primarily be balanced out across the corridor. All cut and fill quantities are estimated and preliminary at this time. NDOT expects that the cut and fill quantities will decrease because of design refinements that would be implemented by NDOT and the selected design-builder.</p> |

Table 2. Comments and Responses Received During the Public Comment Period

| Comment | Response |
|--|--|
| <p>The Nevada Department of Wildlife (NDOW) appreciates the opportunity to comment on the Nevada Department of Transportation's USA Parkway Project. NDOW understands the need to enhance local and regional access and mobility between I-80 and US 50 and hope that we can provide information and make recommendations that aid in the decision making process. Furthermore, it is our desire to ensure that negative impacts to wildlife are minimized while maximizing habitat benefits. As such, we offer the following recommendations for consideration and incorporation into the Environmental Assessment (EA) and will be able to support the proposed avoidance, minimization, and/or mitigation measures proposed in section vii and on pages 3-13,14 (i.e. wildlife crossings, escape ramps, etc) after incorporating the following recommendations.</p> <p>The EA states that wildlife crossings will be installed "where feasible". Rather, we recommend installing crossings near natural wildlife movement corridors (e.g. where existing wildlife movement trails occur, in relation to topography and water sources, etc). Additionally, we recommend not limiting the number of movement corridors to two but instead installing as many as necessary to allow movement. When siting crossing locations, we would appreciate being consulted and can provide bighorn sheep movement information (i.e. GPS collar data).</p> <p>We recommend that wildlife under crossings maximize the openness ratio (i.e. Window ratio) to allow greater wildlife usage. We strongly recommend minimizing the length of wildlife under-crossings, preferably to less than 120 feet in length to ensure that greater than 80 percent of mule deer that approach the structure will use the crossing (Cramer 2013). Further, we recommend the width of the structure be maximized to increase successful passage.</p> | <p>As discussed in the Wildlife Technical Study that is appended to the EA, NDOW was contacted several times during the study to obtain species occurrence information, migration corridors, and to consult on wildlife crossings.</p> <p>NDOT recognizes that, in order to maintain wildlife permeability across USA Parkway and the Virginia Range, NDOT must accurately predict where animals are likely to cross the road and where their movement would be impeded across the landscape. NDOT is currently completing an additional wildlife crossing study that will create and evaluate a series of spatial models used to determine the most appropriate placement of the wildlife crossings. NDOW will be contacted as the study progresses. The number and width of the wildlife crossings would be determined based on wildlife data, property ownership, topographic constraints, and cost. The cross section of the road would be approximately 85 feet, so a structure greater than 120 feet would not be necessary.</p> |
| <p>On page 3-14 the EA states, "The Construction Contractor will ensure wildlife is provided access to water sources during constructions". Although we support this measure, more importantly we recommend ensuring that wildlife continues to have access to water sources post construction. This can be accomplished by placing crossings at appropriate locations (see comments above), developing additional water sources (e.g. guzzler), etc.</p> | <p>Water sources are located on private property outside of the proposed right-of-way. Although the project may result in a slightly longer path to water sources, NDOT has designed the project to avoid existing water sources and to maintain access to these water sources. NDOT will minimize the danger to wildlife and motorists by incorporating wildlife crossings based on the parameters noted above. NDOT suggests that NDOW contact landowners if additional guzzlers are needed in the area.</p> |

Table 2. Comments and Responses Received During the Public Comment Period

| Comment | Response |
|--|--|
| <p>On page 3-14 the EA states that nesting surveys will be conducted prior to any vegetation removal that occurs during the breeding season. We would like to clarify that nesting surveys should be conducted prior to any construction related activities that will occur during the breeding season, not just prior to vegetation removal. This will minimize the occurrences of nest abandonment resulting directly from this project.</p> | <p>Grading is the first step in the construction process. The measure as written in the EA provides appropriate protection for migratory birds.</p> |
| <p>Bridge design features can be used to offset the disruption or removal of bat roost sites due to project impacts. For example, if the bridge is at least 10 feet above the ground, bats will readily use bridge expansion joints and other vertical crevices as day roosts if they are 0.5 – 1.25 inches wide and 12+ inches deep. Additional roost sites may also be achieved by using concrete box culverts that are between 5 and 10 feet tall (Bradley et al 2006).</p> | <p>No impacts to bat roost sites are anticipated. Measures include conducting a preconstruction survey to confirm no new roost sites would occur in the project area.</p> |
| <p>We recommend including a measure in the EA that attempts to mitigate raptors from being hit by cars as they retrieve road killed animals. For example, we recommend stating, “NDOT will consult with NDOW regarding appropriate mitigation measures if raptors are attracted to the USA parkway and present a collision risk.”</p> | <p>Wildlife fencing is expected to minimize the potential for road kill, and additional mitigation is not necessary. USA Parkway will be operated and maintained by NDOT. Regular removal of road killed animals is part of NDOT’s maintenance duties.</p> |

- ^a Lyon County. 2010. *Lyon County Comprehensive Master Plan*. Adopted December 23, 2010.
- ^b Nevada Department of Transportation (NDOT). 2007. *US 50 East Corridor Study*. Website: http://www.nevadadot.com/uploadedFiles/NDOT/About_NDOT/NDOT_Divisions/Planning/2007_US_50_East_Corridor_Study.pdf. Accessed December 2014.
- ^c Nevada Department of Transportation (NDOT). 2010. *Road Design Guide*. Website: https://nevadadot.com/uploadedFiles/NDOT/About_NDOT/NDOT_Divisions/Engineering/Design/2010_Road_Design_Guide.pdf. Accessed December 2014.
- ^d Nevada Department of Transportation (NDOT). 2014. *Transportation System Projects: FY 2015-2024*. Website: https://www.nevadadot.com/About_NDOT/NDOT_Divisions/Planning/Program_Development/Statewide_Transportation_Improvement_Program.aspx. Accessed December 2014.
- ^e Jacobs. 2012. *USA Parkway Traffic Operations Analysis Memorandum*. August 2012.
- ^f Federal Highway Administration (FHWA). 2012. *Federal-Aid Highway Program Guidance on High Occupancy Vehicle Lanes (HOV) Lanes*. November 2012. Website: <http://www.ops.fhwa.dot.gov/freewaymgmt/hovguidance/>. Accessed December 2014.
- ^g Federal Highway Administration (FHWA). 2014. *Accommodating Bicycle and Pedestrian Travel: A Recommended Approach*. Website: http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/bicycle_pedestrian/guidance/design_guidance/design.cfm. Accessed December 2014.

At the Public Hearing, NDOT had an open question and answer session, and the transcript of this is included as Appendix A. NDOT responded to a majority of the comments during the question and answer session. However, several comments did not receive a full response because of the format and time allotted during the session. Table 3 summarizes the comments that NDOT did not directly address at the Public Hearing and lists the project team’s response to each comment.

Table 3. Comments and Responses from the Public Hearing

| Comment Summary | # of Comments on the Topic | Response |
|--|----------------------------|---|
| Speed limits along USA Parkway | 2 | The speed limit along the existing portion of USA Parkway will remain at <u>45</u> miles per hour (note the transcript states 25 miles per hour in error). The new portion of USA Parkway is anticipated to have a 55 mile-per-hour speed limit. |
| Water use and procurement | 2 | In the Water Resources section of the EA (Section 3.4), NDOT has committed to obtain a waiver to use water for highway construction in the case where an existing well will be used, or a new well drilled, to provide construction water as required by Nevada Administrative Code (NAC) 534. The contractor will be responsible to obtain the water used for construction. The amount of water used cannot be estimated at this time because the amount depends on the contractor’s selected method for dust control. |
| USA Parkway property impacts (turn concerns at an affected parcel) | 1 | Wildlife fencing would be provided along USA Parkway, and guardrails would be installed as needed in accordance with AASHTO and NDOT standards. No other walls or barriers are proposed along the alignment. |
| Concern that property impacts are significant | 1 | The EA recognizes noise, visual, construction, and other operational effects on residential properties along Opal Avenue. NEPA regulations direct that significance be determined in terms of "context" (geography) and "intensity" (severity of impact). The project would result in changes to the existing rural residential setting for three homes currently located on Opal Avenue. However, NDOT and FHWA determined that the intensity of these effects would not rise to the level of a significant impact. |
| ROW support for affected property owners | 1 | In the Right-of-Way, Acquisition, and Relocation Impacts section of the EA (Section 3.10), NDOT has committed to comply with Section 205(a) of the Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisitions Policies Act of 1970, as amended. NDOT will provide uniform and equitable treatment of all persons displaced from their homes, businesses, or farms by establishing criteria for proper acquisition and relocation benefit impacts. This will include NDOT contacting each affected property owner to answer the owner’s questions and supporting the owner throughout the acquisition process. |

7. COORDINATION FOLLOWING THE CLOSE OF THE PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

The EA was approved for circulation on October 21, 2014, and a Location/Design Public Hearing was conducted on November 5, 2014. The official comment period ended on November 21, 2014; however, NDOT continues to present information on the project (as requested) and answer questions from state agencies and members of the public.

8. FONSI REQUIREMENTS

This FONSI is based on the EA, supplied materials, and the NDOT's Hearing Certification, which all have been independently evaluated by FHWA and determined to adequately and accurately discuss the need for, environmental issues concerning, and impacts of the project. In addition to the avoidance, minimization, and mitigation commitments described in the EA, a list of avoidance, minimization, and mitigation measures is part of this FONSI (see Table 1). These documents provide sufficient evidence and analysis for determining that an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is not required. FHWA takes full responsibility for the accuracy, scope, and content of the EA and its attachments.

With respect to a FONSI, 23 CFR 771.111(f) requires evaluation of the following:

- The project must connect logical termini and be of sufficient length to address environmental matters on a broad scope,
- The project must have independent utility or independent significance, and
- The project must not restrict consideration of alternatives for other reasonably foreseeable transportation improvements.

LOGICAL TERMINI

The existing terminus of USA Parkway at the I-80 interchange is identified as the project's northern terminus (i.e., end point). Approximately 6 miles of USA Parkway have already been constructed from I-80 to the south, and minimal improvements are anticipated for that section of the alignment. The project's southern terminus would be at US 50. Both termini would provide improved access to major east-west regional and national transportation routes.

INDEPENDENT UTILITY

USA Parkway would provide an important transportation link between Storey County and Lyon County for local residents, TRIC employees, and commercial/freight traffic. The 18.5-mile-long project is independent of other projects in the area, which could include the widening of I-80 and US 50, the further build out of TRIC, and other projects listed in the LCCMP. The Selected Alternative does not depend on the construction of these improvements to be usable, and the Selected Alternative is a reasonable expenditure of public funds to enhance local and regional access and mobility and to provide transportation infrastructure to support existing and future planned land uses and economic development in Storey and Lyon counties.

OTHER TRANSPORTATION PROJECTS

As proposed, the Selected Alternative does not restrict consideration of alternatives for other reasonably foreseeable transportation improvements.

9. STATUTE OF LIMITATIONS

FHWA may publish a notice in the *Federal Register*, pursuant to 23 United States Code 139(1), stating that one or more federal agencies have taken final action on permits, licenses, or approvals for the project. After the notice is published, claims seeking judicial review of those federal agency actions will be barred unless such claims are filed within 150 days after the date of publication of the notice, or within a shorter time period as specified in the federal laws pursuant to which judicial review of the federal agency action is allowed.

10. CONCLUDING STATEMENT

This project is needed to enhance local and regional access and mobility between I-80 and US 50 and to provide transportation infrastructure to support existing and future planned land uses and economic development in Storey and Lyon counties. FHWA has determined that there has been proper consideration of avoidance alternatives to environmentally sensitive areas. Where avoidance is not practical, proper avoidance, minimization, and mitigation measures have been provided for impacts resulting from the Selected Alternative.

11. DETERMINATION

FHWA has determined that the Selected Alternative, as presented in the EA and as described above, would have no significant impact on the human environment. This FONSI is based on the attached EA dated October 2014, which has been independently evaluated by FHWA and has been determined to adequately and accurately discuss the need for, environmental issues concerning, and impacts of the project and the appropriate avoidance, minimization, and mitigation measures. It provides sufficient evidence and analysis for determining that an EIS is not required. FHWA takes full responsibility for the accuracy, scope, and content of the attached EA.



Jin Zhen
Transportation Engineer
Federal Highway Administration



Date



Abdelmoez Abdalla
Environmental Program Manager
Federal Highway Administration



Date

