



Frequently Asked Questions about the Draft EIR

What is the EIR process and how can I provide input?

The Draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR) analyzes the changes or impacts to the physical environment, as well as any mitigation that is feasible to avoid or reduce significant environmental impacts. The California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) requires that the City Council consider public input before considering an EIR for certification. All comments addressing the adequacy of the Draft EIR that are received during the public comment period will be responded to in writing and will become a part of the official record for this project. The Draft EIR will be available for public review from December 4, 2012 through February 1, 2013. During this time, written comments can be:

- hand-delivered or mailed to the Planning Division located at 3900 Main Street, 3rd Floor, Riverside, CA 92522
- e-mailed to DIJENKINS@riversideca.gov
- submitted at meetings for this project: the Casa Blanca Community Group Meeting on December 12th at 7:00 P.M. at Villegas Park, the Orange Terrace Community Group Meeting on December 13th at 6:00 P.M. at Orange Terrace Community Center, and the joint Transportation Board/Planning Commission Workshop on January 9, 2013 at 6:00 P.M. at the County Board of Supervisors' Chambers.

Which scenario is recommended?

Four scenarios are analyzed in the Draft EIR to provide a comprehensive examination of the circulation options. A preferred scenario has not been identified or recommended. The decision to select a preferred scenario is expected to be made by the City Council at a public hearing expected to be held in the Spring of 2013.

If Overlook Parkway isn't going to be connected in Scenarios 1 and 2, why leave it on the Master Plan of Roadways?

The Project builds on the comprehensive planning process for the General Plan 2025. The connection of Overlook Parkway is considered an important parkway connection between the Arlington Heights Greenbelt and Sycamore Canyon Park in the General Plan 2025. Should the City Council decide to remove the connection of Overlook Parkway from the General Plan 2025 a new Traffic Impact Analysis (TIA) for the entire City would need to be performed in order to understand the complete impacts of such a decision.

Can the project be phased?

The scenarios represent a phased approach to the City' Master Plan of Roadways. Scenarios 1 and 2 allow the City to make an informed decision about reinforcing or removing the gates prior to the connection of Overlook Parkway. Scenarios 3 and 4 allow the City to make an informed decision about the construction of planned roadway connections, with the gates removed only after construction of Overlook Parkway is complete.

What is the timing of the implementation of Overlook Parkway and Proposed C Street?

If the City Council decides to complete Overlook Parkway and/or the Proposed C Street a schedule would be developed at that time.

What is the estimated cost for these improvements and who will pay for them?

The planning level estimate to complete Overlook Parkway is \$5 to \$10 million. The planning level cost to complete the Proposed C Street is between \$3 and \$5 million. Large-scale capital projects in the City are funded through a variety of methods, including development impact fees, grants, gas tax or Measure A revenue or long-term financing.

Does the City need to acquire additional right-of-way?

Most intersection improvements can be accommodated within the City's right-of-way. If the connection of Overlook Parkway and the Proposed C Street is approved, the City would need to acquire the necessary right-of-way. To acquire the rights of way, the City would conduct an appraisal of the property and make an offer to purchase to the property to the owners. The City would try and work with the property owners for the purchase of the needed right-of-way. If the City is unable to reach an agreement to purchase the right of way, the City may acquire the right of way through eminent domain proceedings.

Scenario 4 adds a connection to the State Route 91 (SR-91). Would that scenario, if selected, affect the current widening project occurring on the SR-91?

None of the scenarios will affect the current HOV project under construction along the SR-91.

The Draft EIR indicates there will be several significant and unavoidable impacts from this project. How can the City approve a project that causes environmental impacts?

Any project that identifies significant unmitigated effects cannot be approved unless the public agency makes written Findings for those significant effects. In this case, the City would be required to balance economic, legal, social, technological, or other benefits of a project against the unavoidable adverse significant environmental effects. The City would be required to prepare and adopt a Statement of Overriding Considerations finding that any significant adverse environmental effects are acceptable because the benefits to the circulation network, safety and emergency response, and connectivity outweigh the unmitigable environmental effects.

What are the impacts from the Project?

For most of the issues analyzed, impacts from the Project were found to be less than significant. However, there would be significant and unavoidable impacts from Scenarios 1 and 2 from redistribution of traffic in buildout year 2035. In the case of Scenario 1, the increase in vehicle miles traveled would also result in greenhouse gas emissions impacts. Under Scenarios 3 and 4, there would also be significant unavoidable impacts related to the redistribution of traffic in buildout year 2035, and associated impacts to greenhouse gases and noise from traffic on new roadways. As well, there would be construction-related impacts from the roadway segments, which can be reduced to less than significant with mitigation. All scenarios would conflict with a land use policy related to level of service on City arterials; again, this conflict arises in the analysis of traffic buildout year 2035 conditions.

Several tables in the Draft EIR identify intersections that would be improved or have service degraded. How does this relate to significant impacts?

Level of Service (LOS) is a term used in traffic studies to measure how roadways operate, at a range from A to F, with A being the best and F being the worst. While the primary discussion in the Draft EIR is on impacts that would be significant according to the City's thresholds for traffic, there are additional tables to show the number of intersections where the level of service either improves (i.e., from B to A) or degrades without resulting in an impact.

Will Overlook Parkway be used as a shortcut?

The scenarios consider traffic patterns and controls for roadways, but do not propose development that would generate new trips (e.g., an increase in average daily traffic or ADT) within the study area; however, the scenarios could redistribute traffic on existing and new roads. Because some existing trips within the City are due to regional traffic and vehicles taking alternate routes to access freeways, the Traffic Impact Analysis evaluates the potential for new or additional regional cut-through traffic that may go through the City when Overlook Parkway is completed. Since Scenarios 3 and 4 would add new roadways or connections not currently available to drivers, some vehicles would be redirected to routes such as Overlook Parkway; however, traffic volumes on Overlook Parkway in both the near-term and buildout conditions would be within the capacity that this roadway is designed to accommodate.

Can all buildout year (2035) traffic impacts be mitigated, and what is the scenario with the least traffic impact to neighborhoods?

The City can generally accommodate effects of additional vehicles associated with traffic in the near-term; however, growth associated with buildout of the City in year 2035 will put a strain on the local roadway network over time. The traffic analysis for the General Plan 2025 concluded that there would be significant and unavoidable traffic impacts, and the City determined that not all locations would be improved to accommodate regional traffic. This is due, in part, to constraints related to adding and expanding roadways. When examining buildout or cumulative traffic impacts, for the Project, the analysis took into account how the Project would redistribute trips on roadways in the Project vicinity plus regional growth and full buildout of the City's future land uses (and the region's future land uses). Therefore, the same roadways affected by buildout (year 2035) conditions would also result in significant impacts with this Project. These impacts would not be mitigated to less than significant for the same reasons discussed in the General Plan 2025 Final EIR.

This Draft EIR provides a full list of the specific intersections and links that would operate at an unacceptable level of service in the buildout Year 2035 condition (refer to Tables 3.11-41 and 3.11-42). Within the study area, 28 intersections were analyzed. In addition, 39 roadway segments, or links, were examined to determine traffic volumes on roads leading up to intersections. Scenarios 1 and 2 would each result in a total of 12 impacts to intersections and links within the Project vicinity, Scenario 3 would result in a total of 10 impacts, and Scenario 4 would result in a total of 9 impacts.

What will be the effects of constructing Overlook Parkway?

Construction of the Overlook Parkway connections would impact biological and cultural resources that would require mitigation to reduce these impacts to less than significant. The Draft EIR also evaluated the impacts of traffic noise from the new roadways and found them to be less than significant for the new portions of Overlook Parkway. There would also be benefits such as efficiency of a direct east-west route from Alessandro Boulevard to Washington Street along with contiguous pedestrian and bicycle routes. It should be noted that the traffic volumes on Overlook Parkway would be within the capacity of what the road is designed to handle.

What will happen to Victoria Avenue?

Scenarios 1, 2, and 3 do not involve project components on or near Victoria Avenue. Under Scenario 4, the alignment for the Proposed C Street would connect Overlook Parkway from Washington Street to the existing intersection of Victoria Avenue and Madison Street. To accommodate four lanes of travel in Proposed C Street, intersection improvements are proposed.

All scenarios would change the distribution of traffic throughout the circulation network and cause the need for traffic signals and turn lanes along Victoria Avenue to improve traffic flow and level of service; however, the decision to implement such improvements would be determined by the City Council.

What is the effect on agricultural areas, designated Greenbelts and Proposition R and Measure C?

Scenarios 1, 2, and 3 do not propose new development in agricultural areas or the Greenbelt, therefore, impacts would be less than significant. Although the Proposed C Street under Scenario 4 would be located in the northwestern portion of the Greenbelt, impacts were determined to be less than significant. A new route was contemplated in the General Plan 2025 to facilitate the movement of traffic from the residential areas in the center of the City to the western portion of the City and SR-91. Given the traffic volumes with buildout of the City and the need to protect the City's Greenbelt, this route is intended to redirect vehicles trips within the Greenbelt from Washington Street and Dufferin Avenue. The alignment of the Proposed C Street would be a relatively small percentage of the entire Greenbelt, and some nurseries could be relocated based on the realignment and roadway vacations in this area. This project would not change the protections and policies related to Proposition R or Measure C. The new route was added to the City's Master Plan of Roadways for the purpose of accommodating planed growth, and would not spur new growth. In order for additional growth to occur within the Greenbelt area, both Proposition R and Measure C would need to be repealed, which requires a vote by popular referendum. Therefore, these measures remain unchanged.

Where can I get more information?

The City has created a web page for this process located at:

<http://www.riversideca.gov/planning/eir.asp>

You can also contact Diane Jenkins, AICP, Principal Planner, at DiJenkins@riversideca.gov or at (951) 826-5625.

December 6, 2012