

Summary and Highlights:

SR-33 Pavement Preservation Project Environmental Assessment

Project Overview

- The California Department of Transportation (Caltrans), as lead agency under NEPA and CEQA, proposes a pavement preservation project on State Route 33 (SR-33) in Ventura County, California, covering Casitas Springs and Ojai (Postmile 6.3 to 13.5).
- The project aims to extend pavement life, improve ride quality, upgrade guardrails, enhance ADA compliance, and improve multi-modal (bicycle, pedestrian, transit) safety and access.

Project Purpose and Need

- **Purpose:** Preserve and extend pavement life, improve multi-modal mobility, and enhance safety for all users.
- **Need:** Existing pavement is deteriorated (notably alligator cracking), guardrails are outdated, and sidewalks/curb ramps are not ADA-compliant. The corridor lacks adequate facilities for non-motorized users, creating safety concerns.

Project Alternatives

Alternative	Description
Build Alternative A1	Pavement preservation (cold plane and overlay), guardrail upgrades, ADA curb ramp upgrades, new sidewalks, bus pads, traffic signal and crosswalk upgrades. No lane reduction.
Build Alternative A2	Includes all A1 improvements plus a "road diet": reduces five lanes to three (one each direction + center turn lane), adds bike lanes, curb extensions, and landscaping between Santa Ana Blvd and Larmier Ave. Two bike lane design options: Class IV (buffered/protected) or Class II (painted buffer).
No-Build	No changes; continued deterioration and safety risks.

Key Environmental Findings

Topics Dismissed from Detailed Analysis

- No adverse impacts identified for: aesthetics, agriculture/forestry, biological/cultural resources, energy, geology/soils, hydrology/water quality, land use, mineral resources, population/housing, recreation, tribal resources, utilities, or service systems.
- Project area is not in a coastal zone, does not affect wild/scenic rivers, parks, or farmland, and does not induce growth or require relocations.

Topics Warranting Further Analysis

Utilities and Emergency Services

- **No-Build/A1:** No anticipated impacts.
- **A2:** No utility relocations. Emergency response could be affected by lane reduction; design will be coordinated with emergency services to mitigate delays. Two bike lane design options considered to address emergency vehicle access.

Traffic, Pedestrian, and Bicycle Facilities

- **Current Issues:** High vehicle volumes, lack of pedestrian/bike infrastructure, and safety concerns (notably, 57% of collisions due to unsafe speeds).
- **Demonstration Project:** Lane reduction with bike lanes was piloted in 2024; mainline traffic remained within acceptable thresholds, but minor street movements saw some degraded levels of service (LOS E/F), particularly for left turns and queue lengths.
- **Build A1:** Maintains current configuration; improves pedestrian safety but lacks dedicated bike lanes.
- **Build A2:** Adds bike lanes, improves safety for non-motorized users, with minor impacts to side street traffic mitigated by measures such as turn restrictions, lane storage extensions, and signal timing adjustments.

Construction Impacts

- Temporary and minimized through standard Caltrans practices: traffic management plans, community outreach, and environmental best management practices.
- 20 temporary construction easements required for ADA upgrades; no property relocations.

Environmental Resources

- **Air Quality:** Temporary construction emissions; minimized by dust control and equipment standards.
- **Noise:** Temporary construction noise; controlled by standard specifications.
- **Hazardous Materials:** Standard controls for lead, hydrocarbons, electronic/treated wood waste.
- **Biological Resources:** Avoidance of impacts to nesting birds and oak woodlands.
- **Water Quality:** Less than 1 acre disturbed; stormwater best practices required.

- **Cultural/Paleontological Resources:** Low probability of discovery; monitoring and stop-work protocols in place.

Cumulative Impacts

- No significant adverse cumulative impacts expected. Lane reduction (A2) anticipated to improve overall safety for all users.

CEQA and NEPA Determinations

- **Negative Declaration (ND)/Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI):** Caltrans proposes a Negative Declaration, finding that the project will not have significant environmental impacts.
- **All resource topics evaluated under CEQA were found to have either "No Impact" or "Less Than Significant Impact" with minimization measures in place.**

Public Involvement and Next Steps

- Public comments are solicited via mail or email; a public hearing will be held.
- After considering comments, Caltrans may approve, further study, or abandon the project.
- If approved and funded, design and construction will proceed.

Notable Highlights

- **Multi-Modal Safety:** Significant improvements for pedestrians, cyclists, and transit users, especially under Alternative A2.
- **Demonstration Project:** Real-world pilot informed traffic analysis and mitigation design.
- **No Significant Environmental Impacts:** With standard and project-specific minimization measures, all impacts are temporary or negligible.
- **Community Engagement:** Emphasis on outreach and coordination, especially regarding construction impacts and emergency access.

Conclusion:

The SR-33 Pavement Preservation Project is a targeted infrastructure upgrade with a strong emphasis on safety, ADA compliance, and multi-modal access. Both build alternatives have minimal environmental impacts, with Alternative A2 offering the greatest benefit for non-motorized users. Caltrans has proposed a Negative Declaration, indicating no significant adverse effects after mitigation. Public input will shape the final decision and design.

