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**INITIAL STUDY  
(REVISED 4/21/08)  
FOR THE  
NORTH NEWHALL SPECIFIC PLAN  
STAGE I: LYONS AVENUE AT-GRADE CROSSING**

Prepared for:  
THE CITY OF SANTA CLARITA

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April 10, 2008





To: Responsible and Trustee Agencies

From: Jason Smisko  
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City of Santa Clarita  
23920 Valencia Street  
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Subject: Notice of Preparation (NOP), North Newhall Specific Plan Stage I: Lyons Avenue At-Grade Crossing

The City of Santa Clarita has prepared an application to the California Public Utilities Commission to construct an at-grade railroad crossing at the intersection of Lyons Avenue and the Southern Pacific Railroad. The project site does not contain known hazardous materials sites. Compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) must precede an application to the CPUC. In addition, this approval is sought prior to the completion of the North Newhall Specific Plan. The City has prepared an initial study for this activity and has found that the project may result in one or more significant effects on the environment; therefore, an environmental impact report (EIR) is being prepared.

The City is seeking comments regarding the scope of the environmental document being prepared. Please submit comments, in writing, within 30 days of receipt of this notice, but no later than 5:00 p.m. on May 18, 2008. Comments may be submitted to Jason Smisko at the above address, or may be emailed to [JSMISKO@santa-clarita.com](mailto:JSMISKO@santa-clarita.com). A scoping meeting will be held for the project on April 28, 2008 at 6:00 p.m. in the City Council chambers. A copy of the NOP is available for review at the Planning Counter, and at the Los Angeles County Library, Valencia Branch. All references are available for review by request from Mr. Smisko. For this and other information, please contact Mr. Smisko at 661.255.4306.

Project Title: North Newhall Specific Plan Stage I: Lyons Avenue at-grade Crossing

Project Applicant, if any: N/A, City Proposal, Community Development Department

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

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## INTRODUCTION

The City of Santa Clarita has prepared an application to the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) for approval of an at-grade roadway and pedestrian crossing of the Southern Pacific Railroad tracks within the city limits at the current eastern terminus of Lyons Avenue. The project consists of the detailed design and analysis of the Lyons Avenue at-grade crossing; lane configuration, signal timing, gate design, traffic analysis/traffic study, etc. in accordance with CPUC requirements. Approval of the at-grade crossing by the CPUC is a central component in the development of a Specific Plan for the North Newhall Specific Plan area, and for the implementation of the City General Plan Circulation Element, which specifies the extension of Lyons Avenue/Dockweiler Drive to the east. If the at-grade crossing is not approved, the General Plan Circulation Plan will need to be reconsidered and possibly amended, and the North Newhall Specific Plan will need to respond to a different circulation system.

The City anticipates a number of significant impacts related to this project, and is therefore preparing an environmental impact report (EIR). The City will prepare a Staged EIR for the project.

**Project Description.** The project for this first stage of the EIR is CPUC approval, and construction of, the at-grade crossing at Lyons Avenue. The second stage would consist of the extension of Lyons Avenue/Dockweiler Drive to Via Princessa and the development and implementation of a larger Specific Plan. Only the portions of the CPUC application relating to the crossing itself are considered in detail at this stage of the environmental review process. Other aspects of the project are considered to the extent they have bearing on the CPUC application process, and to the extent details are known. Accordingly, this stage of the EIR will not allow for approval of the Dockweiler Drive extension or approval of the Specific Plan with its associated development potential. However, assumptions about the eventual extension of this roadway and the implementation of the Specific Plan will be incorporated into the traffic analysis and will be discussed generally in this stage of the EIR. The City action is limited to approval of an application to the CPUC for the following:

*Lyons Avenue at-grade crossing*

*13th Street at-grade crossing abandonment,*

Assuming CPUC approval, Stage II of the EIR will provide a full analysis of the construction of the crossing as well as potential impacts associated with the extension of Lyons Avenue/Dockweiler Drive and impacts associated with the North Newhall Specific Plan.

## COMPLIANCE WITH CEQA

The City of Santa Clarita (the City), as the lead agency, has entered into the environmental review process to assess potential impacts that could arise from the implementation of the proposed project. Through this documentation process, the City ensures that all possible environmental effects are fully disclosed in compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).

The proposed Lyons Avenue Crossing requires the approval of the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC). Whether or not this crossing can be relocated is central to the ultimate design and use of the area known as the North Newhall Specific Plan area. The project proponents are therefore seeking CPUC approval to locate the crossing at Lyons Avenue prior to going forward with a Specific Plan for North Newhall.

Other than zoning potential outlined in the Development Code and land use potential based on the General Plan, it is not yet known what will occur at the North Newhall site. Based on these documents, the following could occur on site:

- Residential Development
- Commercial Development

- Dockweiler Extension
- Lyons Avenue at-grade crossing (connected with Dockweiler Extension)

Ultimately, the Specific Plan may propose amendments to the General Plan and Development Code to allow different uses, a larger or smaller amount of development, and particular proposals regarding the Dockweiler Extension. All of these variables may affect the type and magnitude of impact which would be analyzed in the second stage EIR. As stated previously, whether or not the CPUC will approve the crossing has significant implications for the larger project area. Therefore, a Staged EIR is considered appropriate. This type of document is used when a project involves more than one component, the details of later components are not yet known, and an approval is required at least two years in advance of construction of the later components which affects only a portion of the project.

The City of Santa Clarita will be the lead agency for the preparation of a Staged EIR for the North Newhall Specific Plan. CEQA Guidelines Section 15167 describes the use of a staged EIR as follows:

*(a) Where a large capital project will require a number of discretionary approvals from government agencies and one of the approvals will occur more than two years before construction will begin, a staged EIR may be prepared covering the entire project in a general form. The staged EIR shall evaluate the proposal in light of current and contemplated plans and produce an informed estimate of the environmental consequences of the entire project. The aspect of the project before the public agency for approval shall be discussed with a greater degree of specificity.*

The approval of the at-grade crossing followed by consideration of the roadway extension and Specific Plan are consistent with this description. The purpose of using a Staged EIR is to avoid unnecessary and premature analysis, and to focus the review on the aspects of the project necessary to present to the CPUC a grade crossing permit. As stated previously, the two components of the project (CPUC approval, followed by Specific Plan and roadway extension) are interdependent. The crossing change would not likely be done without the development of the North Newhall Specific Plan area, and vice versa. Preparing two separate CEQA documents could be considered segmenting the analysis, which is not allowed.

### **Stages of the EIR**

STAGE 1: This EIR will focus upon environmental effects of establishing an at-grade crossing at Lyons Avenue, pursuant to the City’s General Plan and consistent with CPUC requirements.

This EIR will assess the potential adverse environmental consequences associated with the detailed design of the crossing; lane configuration, signal timing, gate design, etc. such that the CPUC permit requirements are satisfied. Impacts associated with the various road extensions and specific plan development would be considered in a generalized programmatic approach, as set forth in the table below.

Once the Stage 1 document is certified it will serve as the CEQA compliance document for the CPUC application process. Assuming approval by the CPUC, the City will prepare the Stage II document.

STAGE 2: Detailed analysis of Dockweiler and Via Princessa extensions and a full analysis of the North Newhall Specific Plan development. Analysis of Specific Plan site biology, geotechnical, archaeology, etcetera will occur at this stage (the majority of the analytical detail). A subsequent Notice of Preparation will be circulated and the public will have additional opportunities to comment on the scope of the document, to participate in public hearings, and comment on the EIR.

The following table will help the reader understand the project and the stages at which detailed environmental analysis will occur.

<b>Topic</b>	<b>Stage I</b>	<b>Stage II</b>
Aesthetics	Detailed analysis of effects in the immediate vicinity of the crossing, general discussion of visual resources affected by larger project	Detailed analysis of the entire NNSP area and areas affected by roadway connections
Agriculture	Detailed analysis of effects in the immediate vicinity of the crossing, general discussion of agricultural resources affected by larger project	Detailed analysis of effects throughout the entire NNSP area and areas affected by roadway connections
Air Quality	Detailed analysis of air quality impacts, particularly those related to train operations, intersections operations at the new crossing, and cumulative development in the area	Detailed analysis of quantified development potential of the NNSP, along with cumulative analysis
Biological Resources	Detailed analysis of effects in the immediate vicinity of the crossing, general discussion of larger project area	Detailed analysis of NNSP area, areas affected by roadway connections
Cultural Resources	Detailed analysis of effects in the immediate vicinity of the crossing, general discussion of larger project area	Detailed analysis of NNSP area, areas affected by roadway connections
Geology	Detailed analysis of effects in the immediate vicinity of the crossing, general discussion of larger project area	Detailed analysis of NNSP area and effects of development, as well as impacts related to roadway connections
Hazards and Hazardous Materials	Detailed analysis of effects in the immediate vicinity of the crossing, general discussion of larger project	Detailed analysis of entire NNSP area and effects of development, as well as impacts related to roadway connections
Land Use and Planning	Detailed analysis of land and use and planning impacts of the crossing, general discussion of larger project	Detailed analysis of land use and planning impacts of the implementation of the NNSP and the roadway connections
Mineral Resources	Not to be addressed in EIR based on Initial Study	Not to be addressed in EIR based on Initial Study
Noise	Detailed analysis of noise impacts, including those related to traffic and train operations, general discussion of larger project	Detailed analysis (NNSP, roadway connections)
Public Services	Detailed analysis of impacts related to crossing, in particular issues of emergency access, general discussion of larger project	Detailed analysis of effects of buildout of the NNSP, roadway connections
Recreation	Detailed analysis of impacts related to crossing, general discussion of larger project	Detailed analysis of effects of buildout of the NNSP, connection of roadways
Transportation and Traffic	Detailed analysis of crossing, including conceptual General Plan roadway connections	Detailed analysis of effects of buildout of the NNSP, including all roadway connections
Utilities	Impacts related to crossing, consisting mainly of service disruptions, general discussion of larger project	Detailed analysis of effects of buildout of the NNSP, roadway connections

## **PURPOSE**

This Initial Study has been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) to evaluate the potential for the project to result in significant environmental impacts. As described by Section 15063 of the *CEQA Guidelines*, an Initial Study can be used to:

- Provide a preliminary analysis of potential project-specific and cumulative environmental effects of a proposed project;
- Identify environmental issue areas where the proposed project may have the potential to result in significant impacts that should be evaluated in a project-specific EIR;
- Enable the lead agency to modify a project to avoid or mitigate adverse impacts before an EIR is prepared, thereby allowing a Negative Declaration or a Mitigated Negative Declaration to be prepared for the project; and
- Document the factual basis for the finding in a Negative Declaration or a Mitigated Negative Declaration that a project will not have a significant impact on the environment.

The project will be the subject of an Environmental Impact Report; therefore, this document serves as notice to the public and interested agencies of the proposed scope of the document.

### **LEAD AGENCY**

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 Community Development Department  
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 Santa Clarita, California 91355

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                           Senior Planner  
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### **LOCATION**

The project is located in the Newhall area of the City of Santa Clarita, east of the Santa Susana Mountains in northern Los Angeles County, California (refer to Figures 1 and 2). Santa Clarita lies east of the I-5 south of Castaic Junction and the intersection with San Fernando Road, formerly known as Highway 126. Major landmarks in the area include Magic Mountain to the northwest, Interstate 5 to the west, and the Santa Clara River to the north. The project area is at the current terminus of Lyons Avenue at the Southern Pacific Railroad tracks in the community known as Newhall. The general area affected by the project is shown in Figure 3.

### **BACKGROUND**

**General Plan.** The Santa Clarita General Plan was adopted in 1991 and has been amended over the intervening years. The Circulation Element for the City identifies the Lyons Avenue corridor as a major roadway, and programs for Dockweiler Drive to connect the city with Sierra Highway and Highway 14. In order to achieve this goal, the present terminus of Lyons Avenue at San Fernando Road must be removed and crossing must be installed.

The City General Plan also designates the North Newhall Specific Plan area, east of the railroad tracks and north of Old Town Newhall (see Figure 3). The North Newhall Specific Plan area is to contain a mix of residential and non-residential uses.

**Zoning.** In the immediate vicinity of the proposed crossing, land uses include Industrial Commercial and Special Purpose (railroad). As mentioned previously, the North Newhall area is designated a Specific Plan area, with a mix of residential and non-residential uses.

## OBJECTIVES

The purpose of the project is to achieve CPUC approval of an at-grade crossing at the current terminus of Lyons Avenue and the Southern Pacific Railroad line. The project has the following objectives:

- Develop and implement a Specific Plan for the North Newhall area as designated in the General Plan
- Implementation of the goals of the Circulation Element of the Santa Clarita General Plan, including the crossing at Lyons Avenue and the eventual extension of Lyons Avenue/Dockweiler Drive
- Provide a crossing meeting the standards of the CPUC
- Provide sufficient information for CPUC application and approval of the proposed crossing

## APPROVALS

Responsible agencies are defined in Section 15381 of the CEQA Guidelines as “...all public agencies other than the lead agency which have discretionary approval power over the project.”

Possible responsible agencies for the project or components of the project include:

- California Public Utilities Commission
- Metrolink/Southern California Regional Rail Authority
- Army Corps of Engineers
- California Department of Fish and Game
- Los Angeles County Fire Department
- Los Angeles County Public Works Department
- Metropolitan Transportation Authority
- Regional Water Quality Control Board
- South Coast Air Quality Management District
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

The roles of the responsible agencies vary according to their jurisdictional powers. Specific future approvals by agency include, but are not limited to:

- City of Santa Clarita
  - Approval of an application to the CPUC for the at-grade crossing at Lyons Avenue, including certification of the Stage I EIR
- CPUC
  - Approval of the application for the crossing, and certification of the Proponent’s Environmental Assessment (the Stage I EIR)
- City of Santa Clarita
  - City Council approval of North Newhall Specific Plan and certification of the Stage II EIR
- Army Corps of Engineers (Section 404 NWP for future creek crossing)
- California Department of Fish and Game (1601 Streambed Alteration Agreement for future creek crossing)
- Regional Water Quality Control Board (NPDES for individual projects >1 acre, 401 Water Quality Certification for future creek crossing)

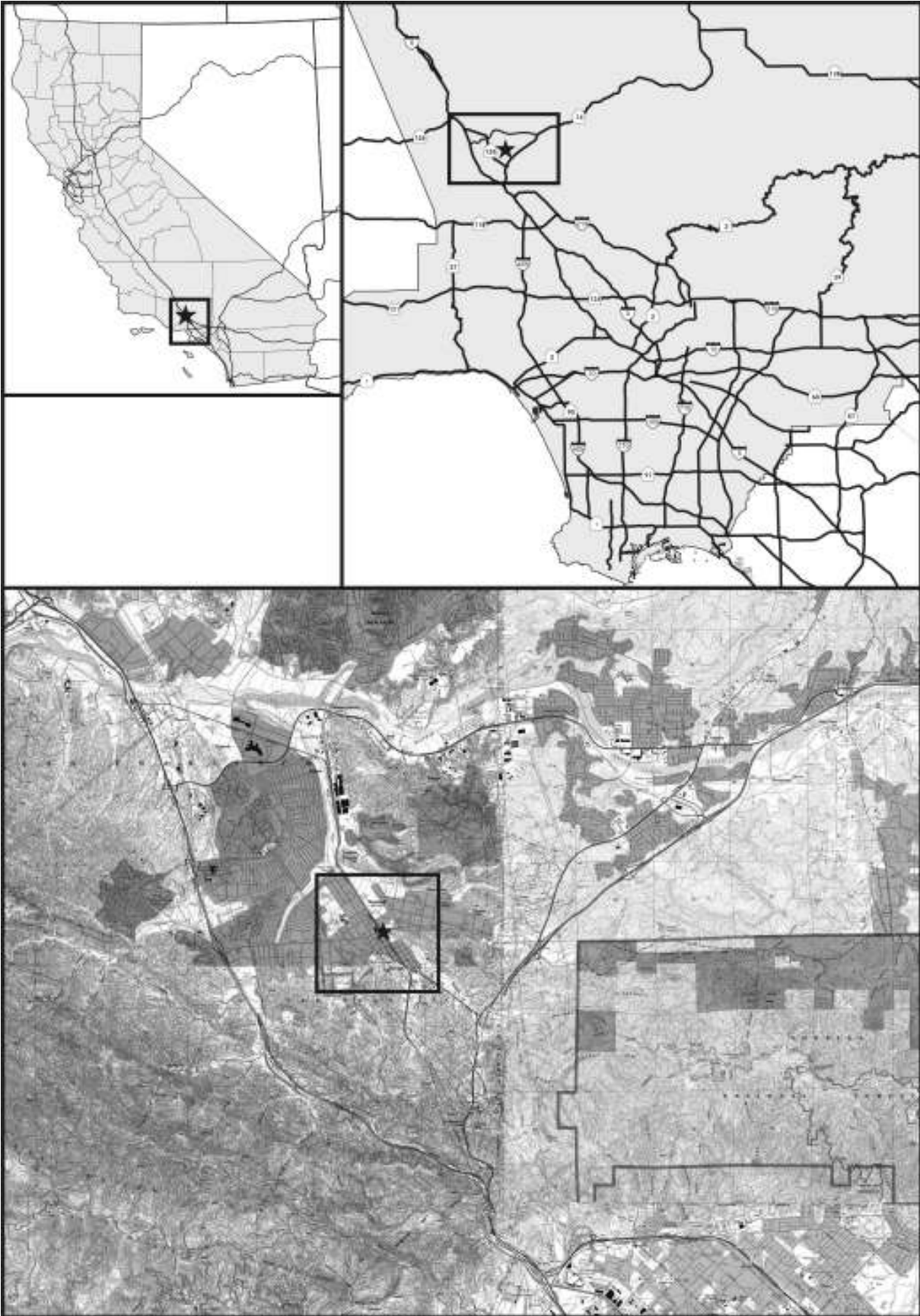


Figure 1. Regional Location

*Figure 2. Project Area (Tight)*

*Insert Figure 3. North Newhall (larger aerial)*

## ENVIRONMENTAL CHECKLIST

This section discusses potential environmental impacts associated with the project.

**Project Title:** Lyons Avenue At-Grade Crossing

**Lead Agency:** City of Santa Clarita

**Contact Person:** Jason Smisko  
Senior Planner  
JSMISKO@santa-clarita.com  
(661) 255-4306

**Project Location:** City of Santa Clarita, east of the Santa Susana Mountains in eastern Los Angeles County, California (refer to Figure 3-1). Santa Clarita lies east of the I-5 just south of the Grapevine. Project area includes North Newhall Specific Plan area, but specifically, the proposed crossing location at the present terminus of Lyons Avenue at the railroad tracks.

**Project Sponsor:** City of Santa Clarita

**Land Use Designation(s):** Industrial Commercial

**Zoning:** Industrial Commercial

**Project Description:** Application to the CPUC for an at-grade crossing at the current terminus of Lyons Avenue at the railroad tracks.

**Surrounding Land Uses and Setting:**

Vacant land and Jan Heidt Metrolink Station (south), Light Industrial use (north), community of Newhall (west), undeveloped land and Newhall Creek (east)

**Other Agencies Whose Approval is Required:**

California Public Utilities Commission

## ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS POTENTIALLY AFFECTED

Descriptions of project-related impacts that have the potential to be significant, or that have been determined to be less than significant, are provided in the narrative in this Initial Study.

The evaluation of potential environmental impacts determined that the project would not result in environmental impacts or less than significant impacts in the issue areas that are listed below and that are denoted with a “\*”. The project has the potential to result in significant environmental impacts in issue areas denoted with a “✓”.

✓	Aesthetics	✓	Agriculture Resources	✓	Air Quality
✓	Biological Resources	✓	Cultural Resources	✓	Geology/Soils/Geotechnical
✓	Hazards & Hazardous Materials	✓	Hydrology/Water Quality	✓	Land Use/Planning
*	Mineral Resources	✓	Noise	✓	Population/Housing
✓	Public Services	✓	Recreation	✓	Transportation/Traffic
✓	Utilities/Service Systems	✓	Mandatory Findings of Significance		

- \* No impact or less than significant impact
- ✓ Significant or potentially significant impact

## CEQA GUIDANCE

The State CEQA Guidelines were used in answering the checklist questions:

1. A brief explanation is required for all answers except “No Impact” answers that are adequately supported by the discussion. A “No Impact” answer is adequately supported if the discussion shows that the impact simply does not apply to projects like the one involved (e.g., the project falls outside a fault rupture zone). A “No Impact” answer should be explained when it is based on project-specific factors as well as general standards (e.g., the project will not expose sensitive receptors to pollutants, based on a project-specific screening analysis).
2. All answers must take account of the whole action involved, including offsite as well as onsite, cumulative as well as project-level, indirect as well as direct, and construction as well as operational impacts.
3. Once the lead agency has determined that a particular physical impact may occur, then the checklist answers must indicate whether the impact is potentially significant, less than significant with mitigation, or less than significant. “Potentially Significant Impact” is appropriate if there is substantial evidence that an effect may be significant. If there are one or more “Potentially Significant Impact” entries when the determination is made, an EIR is required.
4. “Negative Declaration: Less than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated” applies where the incorporation of mitigation measures has reduced an effect from “Potentially Significant Impact” to a “Less Than Significant Impact.” The lead agency must describe the mitigation measures, and briefly explain how they reduce the effect to a less-than-significant level (mitigation measures from earlier analyses may be cross-referenced).

5. Earlier analyses may be used where, pursuant to the tiering, program EIR, or other CEQA process, an effect has been adequately analyzed in an earlier EIR or negative declaration (State CEQA Guidelines Section 15063[c][D]). In this case, a brief discussion should identify the following:
  - a). *Earlier Analysis Used.* Identify and state where they are available for review.
  - b). *Impacts Adequately Addressed.* Identify which effects from the above checklist were within the scope of and adequately analyzed in an earlier document pursuant to applicable legal standards, and state whether such effects were addressed by mitigation measures based on the earlier analysis.
  - c). *Mitigation Measures.* For effects that are “Less than Significant with Mitigation Measures Incorporated,” describe the mitigation measures which were incorporated or refined from the earlier document and the extent to which they address site-specific conditions for the project.
6. Lead agencies are encouraged to incorporate into the checklist references to information sources for potential impacts (e.g., general plans, zoning ordinances). Reference to a previously prepared or outside document should, where appropriate, include a reference to the page or pages where the statement is substantiated.
7. *Supporting Information Sources:* A source list should be attached, and other sources used or individuals contacted should be cited in the discussion.
8. This is only a suggested form, and lead agencies are free to use different formats; however, lead agencies should normally address the questions from this checklist that are relevant to a project’s environmental effects in whatever format is selected.
9. The explanation of each issue should identify:
  - a) the significance criteria or threshold, if any, used to evaluate each question; and
  - b) the mitigation measure identified, if any, to reduce the impact to less than significance

Identification of the potential for residual significant adverse environmental impacts would trigger the need for preparation of an EIR. For issue areas in which no significant adverse impact would result or impacts would be reduced to a less-than-significant level by mitigation, further analysis is not required.

Issues	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
<b>I. AESTHETICS</b>				
Would the proposal:				
a. Have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista?	X			
b. Substantially damage scenic resources, including, but not limited to, tree, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a scenic state highway?	X			
c. Substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings?	X			
d. Create a new source of substantial light or glare which would adversely affect day or nighttime views in this area?	X			

## Setting

### *Scenic Vistas*

Scenic vistas are publicly accessible viewpoints that provide views of areas that exemplify a community's environment (i.e., scenic resources). The Santa Clarita General Plan identifies the Angeles National Forest and the Los Padres National Forest as major scenic resources in the area, as well as woodlands extending into area canyons, and waterways such as the Santa Clara River, Placerita Canyon and Newhall Creek. The General Plan states that these resources represent "the feeling of development placed within a country or rural area." These resources are visible from numerous locations throughout the city, including I-5, Main Street and Soledad Canyon Road.

### *Scenic Quality and Character*

The analysis of visual impacts is not an exact science. There have been few comprehensive programs designed to incorporate visualization tools into modeling systems, or evaluate the usefulness and applicability of such systems. Quantitative analysis is therefore difficult at best. As a result, visual quality is often rated on a relative qualitative scale, which places high value on expansive, prominent features, variation in topography and items of visual interest such as rock outcroppings or peaks. High value visual environments in urban areas include those that impart a strong sense of unity and proportion, as well as unique or interesting design features.

Impacts to scenic quality and character are assessed from publicly accessible viewpoints; there are no state or federal designated scenic routes in the planning area. Locally, views from major roadways such as I-5 and Main Street are considered important. Within the project area, views from Main Street and passing trains are considered of primary importance. As mentioned previously views from the project area are both urban and rural in nature. In the project area, the visual quality of the environment is diminished by the lack of uniformity in terms of both type and design of existing structures, and the presence of relatively denuded natural areas. The overall scenic quality and character is considered common to low.

*Light and Glare*

Sources of light in the planning area include streetlights, and exterior lighting. The project area and city are largely lit, with the exception of undeveloped portions of Newhall Creek.

Glare is light reflected off of reflective surfaces, including expanses of glass, and certain siding and paving materials, as well as metal roofing.

**Significance Criteria**

State CEQA Guidelines consider an impact significant if the project will have “a substantial, demonstrable negative aesthetic effect.” Impacts are generally considered significant if the proposed project would substantially block an existing view from a scenic corridor or if the character of an area were impaired. Impacts are also considered potentially significant if substantial light and glare would be generated by the project, or if residents would be subject to substantial light or glare.

**Discussion of Checklist Answers**

- a-b. Scenic features visible from the project area include Placerita Canyon and the Newhall Creek corridor. The EIR will evaluate impacts to important aesthetic features in the area from the at-grade crossing, in detail, and from the North Newhall Specific Plan and roadway connections, in general.
- c. As discussed above, the existing quality and character of the visual environment within the planning area is diminished and obscured to a large degree by the form of existing development and the degraded quality of the natural environment. However, the EIR will evaluate, in detail, the impact of the crossing on the quality and character of the environment, and will discuss, in general, the impacts of the North Newhall Specific Plan and roadway connections.
- d. The EIR will evaluate the potential for light and glare from the proposed crossing, and will address, in general, the impacts of the North Newhall Specific Plan and roadway connections.

**Conclusion**

The EIR will address impacts related to scenic vistas, scenic features, aesthetic quality and character, and added light and glare.

Issues	Potentially Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Significant Impact
<b>II. AGRICULTURAL RESOURCES.</b>			
In determining whether impacts to agricultural resources are significant environmental effects, lead agencies may refer to the California Agricultural Land Evaluation and Site Assessment Model (1997) prepared by the California Dept. of Conservation as an optional model to use in assessing impacts on agriculture and farmland.			
Would the proposal:			
a. Convert Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of	X		

Issues	Potentially Significant Impact	Potentially Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
Statewide Importance (Farmland), as shown on the maps prepared pursuant to the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program of the California Resources Agency, to non-agricultural use?				
b. Conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use, or a Williamson Act contract?				X
c. Involve other changes in the existing environment which, due to their location or nature, could result in conversion of Farmland, to non-agricultural use?	X			

**Discussion**

- a. The EIR will evaluate whether the project area contains important farmland based on underlying soils and use.
- b. The project area is not designated for agricultural use in the Unified Development Code, and is not under a Williamson Act contract.
- c. The EIR will evaluate whether the implementation of the project would lead to conversion of farmland to non-agricultural use.

**Conclusion**

The EIR will evaluate the project area potential to support farmland, and will address whether the project will lead to further conversion of farmland. The area is not zoned for agricultural use and is not subject to a Williamson Act contract; therefore, these topics will not be addressed further in the EIR.

Issues	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
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**III. AIR QUALITY**

Where available, the significance criteria established by the applicable air quality management or pollution control district may be relied upon to make the following determinations. Would the project:

- a. Conflict with or obstruct implementation of the applicable air quality plan? X

Issues	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
		with Mitigation Incorporated		
b. Violate any air quality standard or contribute substantially to an existing or projected air quality violation?	X			
c. Result in a cumulatively considerable net increase of any criteria pollutant for which the project region is non-attainment under an applicable federal or state ambient air quality standard (including releasing emissions which exceed quantitative thresholds for ozone precursors)?	X			
d. Expose sensitive receptors to substantial pollutant concentrations?	X			
e. Create objectionable odors affecting a substantial number of people?			X	

### Setting

The planning area is located within the South Coast Air Basin and is subject to the regulation of the South Coast Air Quality Management District (SCAQMD). The planning area is in non-attainment for both the federal and state standards for ozone, carbon monoxide, and nitrogen dioxide, and the state standard for PM10. The air quality monitoring station for the Santa Clarita Valley is located in Newhall; the historical reading for the various pollutants is included in the following table:

Pollutant	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
Ozone, ppm – Maximum Concentration 1-Hour	0.12	0.13	0.18	0.17	<b>0.19</b>	0.16
Number of days state standard exceeded (>0.09 ppm)	18	36	49	81	<b>89</b>	69
Number of days federal standard exceeded (>0.12 ppm)	0	1	9	32	<b>35</b>	13
Carbon Monoxide, ppm – Maximum Concentration - 8 Hour	3.6	<b>4.8</b>	3.14	1.9	1.7	3.7
Number of days state standard exceeded (>20.0/9.0 ppm)	0/0	0/0	0/0	0/0	0/0	0/0
Number of days federal standard exceeded (>35.0/9.0 ppm)	0/0	0/0	0/0	0/0	0/0	0/0
Nitrogen Dioxide, ppm – Maximum Concentration – 1-Hour	0.099	0.096	0.10	0.10	<b>0.12</b>	0.09
Number of days state standard exceeded (>0.25 ppm)	0	0	0	0	0	0
Particulate Matter, <10 microns, µg/m <sup>3</sup> – Maximum Concentration - 24 Hours	<b>75</b>	55	62	61	72	54
Number of samples exceeding state threshold (>50 µg/m <sup>3</sup> )	<b>12</b>	2	4	7	10	2
Number of samples exceeding federal threshold (>150 µg/m <sup>3</sup> )	0	0	0	0	0	0
Annual Geometric Mean (State Standard = 30 µg/m <sup>3</sup> )	34.5	29.0	28.5	32.5	NA	NA
Annual Arithmetic Mean (Federal Standard = 50 µg/m <sup>3</sup> )	38.3	31.2	32.0	33.3	31.8	28.1

Source: [www.aqmd.gov/smog/AirQualitybyYear.htm](http://www.aqmd.gov/smog/AirQualitybyYear.htm) accessed 4/2/08

Ozone is of particular concern in the valley. Review of SCAQMD data shows that the Santa Clarita Valley has some of the highest ozone readings in the air basin. This is due in large part to transport of pollutants from the

Los Angeles Basin. In general, ozone levels are in decline throughout California, due mainly to reductions in automobile emissions due to engine alterations.

**Discussion of Checklist Answers**

a. The applicable Clean Air Plan for the project is the SCAQMD 2003 Air Quality Management Plan. Consistency with the CAP is determined through answering the following questions:

- Is the project consistent with the population projections contained in the CAP?
- Does the project increase the rate of travel or VMT in a manner inconsistent with the CAP?
- Does the project include TCMs and other measures contained in the CAP?

The EIR will contain a detailed evaluation of the crossing’s consistency with the CAP, and will address consistency of the North Newhall Specific Plan and roadway connections in general.

b-d. The EIR will contain a detailed evaluation of the crossing’s potential to violate standards, including through project-specific and cumulative increases in pollutants, and the project’s potential to impact sensitive receptors, including pollutant buildup at intersections. The EIR air quality analysis will include general assumptions about the North Newhall Specific Plan and roadway connections.

e. Objectionable odors can include livestock, waste, or industrial emissions. The project will not be a source of such odors. This issue will not be addressed further in the EIR.

**Conclusion**

The EIR will address consistency of the project with the applicable CAP, and the potential for the project to generate pollutants. The EIR will not address the issue of odors further.

Issues	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
<b>IV. BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES</b>				
Would the proposal:				
a. Have a substantial adverse effect, either directly or through habitat modifications, on any species identified as a candidate, sensitive, or special status species in local or regional plans, policies, or regulations, or by the California Department of Fish and Game or U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service?	X			
b. Have a substantial adverse effect on any riparian habitat or other sensitive natural community identified in local or regional plans, policies, or regulations, or by the California Department of Fish and Game or US Fish and Wildlife Service?		X		

Issues	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
c. Have a substantial adverse effect on federally protected wetlands as defined by Section 404 of the Clean Water Act (including, but not limited to, marsh, vernal pool, coastal, etc.) through direct removal, filling, hydrological interruption, or other means?	X			
d. Interfere substantially with the movement of any native resident or migratory fish or wildlife species or with established native residents or migratory wildlife corridors, or impede the use of native wildlife nursery sites?	X			
e. Conflict with any local policies or ordinances protecting biological resources, such as a tree preservation policy or ordinance?	X			
f. Conflict with provisions of an adopted Habitat Conservation Plan, Natural Community Conservation Plan, or other approved local, regional, or state habitat conservation plan?				X

## Setting

Newhall Creek and its environs represent the major natural feature in the project vicinity. Newhall Creek has been somewhat disturbed. Upper story or canopy vegetation is limited, and the creek banks and channel show evidence of erosion. An informal equestrian crossing currently exists in the vicinity of the intersection of Market Street and Race Street, and pedestrians from The Master's College also use the crossing to connect from a trail to the downtown area. Because it is somewhat disturbed, the potential for sensitive plants and animals is diminished. However, sensitive plants and/or animals may persist, including the San Fernando Valley spineflower (*Chorizanthe parryi* var. *fernandina*), Slender-horned spineflower (*Dodecabeema leptoceras*), Davidon's bush mallow (*Malacothamnus davidsonii*), Spreading navarretia (*Navarretia fossalis*), Coastal western whiptail (*Cnemidophorus tigris multiscutatus*), and Two-striped garter snake (*Thamnophis hammondi*). Raptors and other various sensitive birds may forage along the creek channel. Similar habitat and species mix can be expected in relatively undeveloped areas in and surrounding the North Newhall Specific Plan area and the areas affected by roadway connections.

## Discussion

- a. The project may impact sensitive species, particularly during construction activities. The EIR will address potential impacts to sensitive species in the short and long-term.
- b. The project may result in direct and indirect impacts to Newhall Creek. The EIR will address short and long-term impacts of the project on Newhall Creek.
- c. Newhall Creek may provide wetland functions. The EIR will address whether the project will impact wetlands during both the construction and operational phases.

- d. The Newhall Creek corridor and surrounding natural areas may provide wildlife movement opportunities. The EIR will address whether the project will create impediments to wildlife movement through direct means (introduction of structures) or indirect means (presence of nuisances such as light and population).
- e. The EIR will evaluate whether the project conflicts with any applicable policies and ordinances protecting biological resources.
- f. There are no Habitat Conservation Plans or Natural Community Conservation Plans that apply to the project area. This issue will not be addressed further in the EIR.

**Conclusion**

Impacts related to sensitive species, wetlands and riparian areas, wildlife corridors, and policies and ordinance protecting biological resources, will be addressed further in the EIR. The EIR will not contain further discussion of Habitat Conservation Plans or Natural Community Conservation Plans.

Issues	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
<b>V. CULTURAL RESOURCES</b>				
Would the proposal:				
a. Cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a historical resource as defined in §15064.5?	X			
b. Cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of an archeological resource pursuant to §15064.5?	X			
c. Directly or indirectly destroy a unique paleontological resource or site or unique geologic feature?	X			
d. Disturb any human remains, including those interred outside of formal cemeteries?	X			

**Setting**

**Archaeology.** A records search was completed for the Downtown Newhall Specific Plan EIR which included the project site. No resources were identified in the search.

**Historical Resources.** The Downtown Newhall Specific Plan EIR identified several historic buildings and features in the Old Town Newhall area, which may be affected by the project.

**Discussion**

- a. The EIR will evaluate whether the proposed crossing, North Newhall Specific Plan, or roadway connections will impact known historic resources in the area.
- b. Based on work completed for the Downtown Newhall Specific Plan EIR, there are no known archaeological resources on the project site. However, resources may be discovered during construction of any of the project components. The EIR will evaluate the potential for impact to archaeological resources during construction.
- c. No known paleontological resources are located within the planning area. However, paleontological resources may be discovered during construction of project components. The EIR will evaluate the potential for impact to paleontological resources during construction.
- d. Based on work completed for the Downtown Newhall Specific Plan EIR, there are no known cemeteries or other human burials located in the planning area. However, construction activity may disturb previously unknown burials. The EIR will evaluate the potential for discovery of burials, and outline procedures to follow in case of discovery.

**Conclusion**

Impacts associated with historic, archaeological, and paleontological resources, as well as burials, will be addressed further in the EIR.

Issues	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
<b>VI. GEOLOGY AND SOILS</b>				
Would the project:				
a. Expose people or structure to potential substantial adverse effects, including the risk of loss, injury, or death involving:				
i. Rupture of a known earthquake fault, as delineated in the most recent Alquist-Priolo Earthquake Fault Zoning Map issued by the State Geologist for the area or based on other substantial evidence of a known fault? Refer to Division of Mines and Geology Special Publication 42.				X
ii. Strong seismic ground shaking?	X			
iii. Seismic-related ground failure, including liquefaction?	X			
iv. Landslides?	X			
b. Result in substantial soil erosion or loss of topsoil?	X			

Issues	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
c. Be located on a geologic unit or soil that is unstable, or that would become unstable because of the project, and potentially result in on- or off-site landslide, lateral spreading, subsidence, liquefaction or collapse?	X			
d. Be located on expansive soil, as defined in Table 18-1-B of the Uniform Building Code (1994), creating substantial risks to life or property?	X			
e. Have soils incapable of adequately supporting the use of septic tanks or alternative wastewater disposal systems where sewers are not available for the disposal of wastewater?				X

**Setting**

The Safety Element of the General Plan provides general information about the geology and seismicity of the project area.

**Seismicity.** Santa Clarita is located in a seismically active portion of California with numerous earthquakes in recent history. The nearest fault is the San Gabriel Fault, located northeast of the project area. Other faults in the vicinity include the Holser and Santa Susana. The most likely significant event in the area could occur along the San Andreas Fault, located 16 miles northeast of the City. None of the faults are mapped through the project area.

**Geology.** The project area is underlain primarily by alluvium, which is found throughout the canyon bottoms and river areas of the City. Alluvium is silt deposited by creeks and rivers. The major hazard associated with alluvium is liquefaction. Alluvium tends to be unconsolidated, meaning there is space between the “grains” of soil. If alluvium is sufficiently saturated, and an earthquake occurs, the soil can take on more liquid characteristics, damaging structures.

**Discussion of Checklist Answers**

- ai. Rupture is primarily of concern where a project site overlies or is immediately adjacent to a known fault. No known faults are located within the project area. This issue will not be addressed further in the EIR.
- aii. The entire valley is at risk of damage from strong seismic groundshaking. As mentioned above, a number of active faults cross or are near to the City. An earthquake of sufficiently high magnitude along any of the faults could damage structures or lead to loss of life within the City. The EIR will evaluate the potential for groundshaking to affect the proposed crossing in detail, and the North Newhall Specific Plan and roadway connection development, in general.
- aiii. The EIR will evaluate the project’s potential for risks related to liquefaction.
- aiv. The EIR will evaluate the project’s potential for risks related to landslide.

- b. The EIR will evaluate the project's risk of exposure to, or generation of, erosion.
- c. The EIR will evaluate the project's risks related to unstable soils.
- d. The project will not utilize septic systems. This issue will not be addressed further in the EIR.

**Conclusion**

The EIR will address risks related to groundshaking, liquefaction, landslide, erosion, and unstable soils. The EIR will not address further issues related to ground rupture or septic systems.

Issues	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
<b>VII. HAZARDS AND HAZARDOUS MATERIAL</b>				
Would the project:				
a. Create a significant hazard to the public or the environment through the routine transport, use, or disposal of hazardous materials?	X			
b. Create a significant hazard to the public or the environment through reasonably foreseeable upset and accident conditions involving the release of hazardous materials into the environment?	X			
c. Emit hazardous emissions or handle hazardous or acutely hazardous materials, substances, or waste within one-quarter mile of an existing or proposed school?	X			
d. Be located on a site which is included on a list of hazardous materials sites compiled pursuant to Government Code Section 65962.5 and, as a result, would it create a significant hazard to the public or the environment?				X
e. For a project located within an airport land use plan or, where such a plan has not been adopted, within two miles of a public airport or public use airport, would the project result in a safety hazard for people residing or working in the project area?				X
f. For a project within the vicinity of a private airstrip, would the project result in a safety hazard for people residing or working in the project area?				X

g. Impair implementation of or physically interfere with an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan? X

h. Expose people or structures to a significant risk of loss, injury or death involving wildland fires, including where wildlands are adjacent to urbanized areas or where residences are intermixed with wildlands? X

## Setting

**Hazardous Materials.** The transport and clean-up of hazardous materials in the community is subject to regulation by a number of agencies, including Caltrans, and the Los Angeles County Fire Department. Risks associated with hazardous materials in the vicinity of the project site include the following:

*Area Roadways.* According to the City's Safety Element, roadways in the vicinity of the planning area pose the highest risk of release of hazardous materials. Roadways such as San Fernando Road, the Antelope Valley Freeway (14) and the I-5 are approved for use by trucks carrying hazardous materials. Accidents involving such trucks, especially along San Fernando Road could release hazardous substances that would affect the project site.

*Rail lines.* Union Pacific Railroad transports hazardous materials through the community. Risk of accident and upset conditions exist along these lines, and would affect the project site.

*Industrial facilities.* Industrial facilities around the project site pose risk of hazardous materials release. Automobile service operations in the planning area could release oil, lubricants, and other materials into the environment, for example, and manufacturing plants outside of the planning area have historically contaminated groundwater supplies and soils through improper operation.

*Natural gas lines.* A number of natural gas transmission lines traverse areas near the project site. Rupture of these lines due to construction activity or seismic activity would release natural gas into the immediate area.

*Known Hazardous Materials Sites.* There are no documented hazardous materials sites located within the planning area.

**Wildland Fire.** According to the City's GIS Maps available at <http://www.santa-clarita.com/cityhall/admin/technology/gis/products5.asp>, the project site is within an identified high fire hazard area.

## Discussion of Checklist Answers

a-b. The EIR will evaluate the project's potential to impact the routine use, transport, and storage of hazardous materials, and will address the project's potential to result in upset or accident conditions. In particular, the EIR will evaluate the potential for the crossing and roadway connections to affect transport and accident potential for truck and freight rail traffic, and will address generation and use of hazardous materials at the North Newhall Specific Plan area in general terms. The project will not affect locations for disposal of hazardous materials; therefore, this topic will not be addressed further in the EIR.

c. The planning area is within ¼-mile of William S. Hart High School, located on Newhall Avenue. The EIR will address the potential for use, transport, and accidents to affect the school.

- d. Based on a review of the state Cortese List (accessed 4/08), there are no known hazardous materials sites located within the project area.
- e-f. The project area is not located within and airport land use plan area nor is it proximate to a public or private airport.
- g. The project will alter circulation routes and may therefore affect both emergency access and evacuation routes. The EIR will address the project's impacts on both.
- h. The project is located near wildland areas at risk of severe fire events. The EIR will address the project's risk of damage or loss of life from fires, and will address access for fire protection personnel and equipment.

**Conclusion**

The EIR will address potentially significant impacts related to the routine use, transport or storage of hazardous materials, impacts to schools, impacts to emergency access and evacuation routes, and risks related to wildfire. The EIR will not address issues related to disposal of hazardous materials, sites on the Cortese List, or impacts related to airport safety.

Issues	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
<b>VIII. HYDROLOGY AND WATER QUALITY</b>				
Would the project:				
a. Violate any water quality standards or waste discharge requirements?	X			
b. Substantially deplete groundwater supplies or interfere substantially with groundwater recharge such that there would be a net deficit in aquifer volume or a lowering of the local groundwater table level (e.g., the production rate of pre-existing nearby wells would drop to a level which would not support existing land uses or planned uses for which permits have been granted)?	X			
c. Substantially alter the existing drainage pattern of the site or area, including through the alteration of the course of a stream or river, in a manner which would result in substantial erosion or siltation on- or off-site?	X			

Issues	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
d. Substantially alter the existing drainage pattern of the site or area, including through the alteration of the course of a stream or river, or substantially increase the rate or amount of surface runoff in a manner which would result in flooding on- or off-site?	X			
e. Create or contribute runoff water which would exceed the capacity of existing or planned stormwater drainage systems or provide substantial additional sources of polluted runoff?	X			
f. Otherwise substantially degrade water quality?	X			
g. Place housing within a 100-year flood hazard area as mapped on a federal Flood Hazard Boundary or Flood Insurance Rate Map or other flood hazard delineation map?	X			
h. Place within a 100-year flood hazard area structures which would impede or redirect flood flows?	X			
i. Expose people or structures to a significant risk of loss, injury or death involving flooding, including flooding as a result of the failure of a levee or dam?	X			
j. Inundation by seiche, tsunami, or mudflow?	X			

## Setting

*Groundwater Supplies.* The project area is served by the Newhall County Water District (NCWD). NCWD obtains its water from groundwater sources in the Santa Clarita Valley and from the State Water Project via the Castaic Lake Water Agency (CLWA).

*Drainage and Runoff.* The project area is relatively undeveloped. Runoff sheet flows from the North Newhall area and runoff along Lyons Avenue is captured in existing City storm drains which terminate in the Santa Clara River, located north of the project area.

*Flooding.* Areas generally east of San Fernando Road are located within the 100-year flood zone of Newhall Creek. The extent of the 100 to 500-year flood zone follows Newhall Avenue to Lyons Avenue.

*Tsunami, Seiche, Mudflow.* The project area is too distant from both the ocean and major waterbodies for tsunami or seiches to pose a risk. Significant landslides in the hills surrounding the project area could result in some debris reaching low-lying areas.

**Discussion of Checklist Answers**

- a. The EIR will address impacts related to water quality standards, particularly the contribution of new paved surfaces and construction activities to pollutants in stormwater flows.
- b. The proposed crossing will not impact groundwater supplies through additional water demand. However, implementation of the North Newhall Specific Plan, to the extent it will increase demand for water, may adversely affect groundwater supplies, and additional development in the area may decrease recharge potential. The EIR will address, in general, the impact of the project on groundwater supplies.
- c-f. The EIR will evaluate the potential for both construction and operation of the crossing, implementation of the North Newhall Specific Plan, and construction and operation of other roadway connections to disturb the drainage pattern of the area, and the potentially for erosion, siltation or flooding.
- g-i. Portions of the project area are within the 100-year flood hazard zone associated with Newhall Creek. The EIR will evaluate risks association with flooding for the crossing, and will address, in general, impacts related to development of the North Newhall Specific Plan and the roadway connections.
- j. The planning area is not located in an area at risk of tsunami or seiche. Therefore, these risks will not be addressed further in the EIR. The EIR will evaluate the potential for mudflow to impact the project area, and whether the project will increase risk of mudflow in the area.

**Conclusion**

The EIR will address impacts related to hydrology and water, except for impacts related to tsunami and seiche.

Issues	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
<b>IX. LAND USE PLANNING</b>				
Would the project:				
a. Physically divide an established community?	X			
b. Conflict with any applicable land use plan, policy, or regulation of an agency with jurisdiction over the project (including, but not limited to the general plan, Specific Plan, local coastal program, or zoning ordinance) adopted for the purpose of avoiding or mitigating an environmental effect?	X			
c. Conflict with any applicable habitat conservation plan or natural community conservation plan?				X

**Discussion**

- a. The EIR will evaluate whether the project would physically divide established communities through road design impediments or other means.
- b. The EIR will evaluate whether the project is consistent with all applicable land use plans and regulations of agencies with jurisdiction over the project, including the Santa Clarita General Plan and Development Code, and the CPUC regulations for at-grade crossings.
- c. There are no habitat conservation plans or natural community conservation plans applicable to the project area. This issue will not be addressed further in the EIR.

**Conclusion**

Impacts relating to division of communities and consistency with plans and regulations are considered potentially significant and will be addressed in the EIR. Impacts related to habitat conservation plans and natural community conservation plans will not be addressed further in the EIR.

Issues	Potentially Significant Impact	Less than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
<b>X. MINERAL RESOURCES.</b>				
Would the project:				
a. Result in the loss of availability of a known mineral resource that would be of value to the region and the residents of the state?			X	
b. Result in the loss of availability of a locally important mineral resource recovery site delineated on a local general plan, Specific Plan or other land use plan?			X	

**Discussion of Checklist Answers**

- a-b. There are mineral resources through the City, particularly gravel and aggregate materials, and oil resources. Mineral resource extraction operations are neither active nor possible in the project area given the existing level of development surrounding and within the project area. This issue will not be addressed further in the EIR.

**Conclusions**

Impacts related to mineral resources will not be addressed further in the EIR.

Issues	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
<b>XI. NOISE.</b>				
Would the project result in:				
a. Exposure of persons to or generation of noise levels in excess of standards established in the local general plan or noise ordinance, or applicable standards of other agencies?	X			
b. Exposure of persons to or generation of excessive groundbourne vibration or groundbourne noise levels?	X			
c. A substantial permanent increase in ambient noise levels in the project vicinity above levels existing without the project?	X			
d. A substantial temporary or periodic increase in ambient noise levels in the project vicinity above levels existing without the project?	X			
e. For a project located within an airport land use plan or, where such a plan has not been adopted, within two miles of a public airport or public use airport, would the project expose people residing or working in the project area to excessive noise levels?				X
f. For a project within the vicinity of a private airstrip, would the project expose people residing or working in the project area to excessive noise levels?				X

**Setting**

*Noise Sources.* The dominant noise sources affecting the planning area are vehicle traffic along major roadways such as Lyons Avenue, and San Fernando Road (Main Street). Rail operations along the Metrolink line are also a source of noise in the area. Secondary noise sources include existing industrial and automobile-related service operations.

*Existing Noise Levels and Issues.* According to the Technical Background Report prepared for the Valleywide Plan (February 2004), noise levels at the Metrolink station are just over 65 decibels, with occasional spikes over 70 decibels. Within the project area, noise levels along San Fernando Road (Main Street) range between 52 and 63 decibels.

*Vibration.* The major source of potential vibration in the project area is the rail line.

**Discussion of Checklist Answers**

- a. The proposed crossing will alter the flow of traffic in the area and the noise related to traffic. Additional persons could be exposed to noise as a result. The implementation of the North Newhall Specific Plan would introduce additional population in the area, and would further alter traffic volumes, flow and attendance noise. The EIR will evaluate noise based on information provided by the traffic study.
- b. The major source of vibration in the area is the rail line. The proposed crossing would not affect operations on the rail line, such as number or frequency of trains, such that vibration levels would be altered. The implementation of the North Newhall Specific Plan may expose additional persons to vibration. The EIR will evaluate vibration.
- c-d. As stated in (a) above, the proposed crossing, Specific Plan, and roadway connections would alter traffic patterns in the area and noise related to traffic. The EIR will evaluate both temporary and long-term sources of noise.
- e-f. The planning area is not located within the vicinity of a public or private airport. This issue will not be addressed further in the EIR.

**Conclusion**

Impacts are considered potentially significant and will be addressed further in the EIR, with the exception of impacts related to public and private airports.

Issues	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
<b>XII. POPULATION AND HOUSING.</b>				
Would the project:				
a. Induce substantial population growth in an area, either directly (for example, by proposing new homes and businesses) or indirectly (for example, through extension of roads or other infrastructure)?	X			
b. Displace substantial numbers of existing housing, necessitating the construction of replacement housing elsewhere?	X			
c. Displace substantial numbers of people, necessitating the construction of replacement housing elsewhere?	X			

**Discussion of Checklist Answers**

- a. The proposed crossing would alter the manner in which populations access the east side of Newhall Creek. The implementation of the North Newhall Specific Plan would directly induce growth through new homes and businesses, and the roadway connections would indirectly induce growth through the extension of infrastructure. The EIR will address these effects, with particular emphasis on the crossing

impacts. Impacts related to the North Newhall Specific Plan and roadway connections will be addressed in more general terms.

- b-c. The EIR will evaluate the impacts of the crossing, North Newhall Specific Plan, and roadway connections on existing housing and populations.

**Conclusion**

Impacts to population and housing will be addressed further in the EIR.

Issues	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated	Less-Than-Significant Impact	No Impact
<b>XIII. PUBLIC SERVICES.</b>				
a. Would the project result in substantial adverse physical impacts associated with the provision of new or physically altered governmental facilities, need for new or physically altered governmental facilities, the construction of which could cause significant environmental impacts, in order to maintain acceptable service ratios, response times or other performance objectives for any of the public services:				
i. Fire protection?	X			
ii. Police protection?	X			
iii. Schools?	X			
iv Parks?	X			
v. Other Public Facilities?	X			

**Setting**

*Fire.* The planning area is served by the Los Angeles County Fire Department. The nearest fire station to the project area is located at 24875 North San Fernando Road between 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> Streets.

*Police.* The Los Angeles County Sheriff’s Department handles crime prevention and response within the planning area and the city. The main sheriff’s office is located north of the project area in Valencia. The sheriff’s department maintains a storefront in Newhall, which is typically operated between 8 and 10 hours per day and is sometimes staffed by civilians.

*Schools.* Schools serving the planning area include the Newhall Elementary School District and the William S. Hart High School District. Most of the schools within the districts are over capacity. The Newhall Elementary School District has recently completed a number of construction projects aimed at relieving the overcrowding.

*Parks.* The City of Santa Clarita provides and maintains a number of park facilities, totaling over 200 acres. The William S. Hart Park, located south of the planning area, is operated by Los Angeles County Parks and

Recreation, and totals over 364 acres. The Newhall Community Park is the nearest City-owned park to the planning area, totaling over 14 acres. The City also offers a trail system, in some places connecting to the Pacific Crest Trail. The City is currently aiming for 4 acres of parkland per 1,000 residents. The City is currently deficient in local parkland.

*Libraries.* The Newhall Library comprises over 4,800 square feet of facility space. All libraries in the city are operated by the County of Los Angeles. Current facilities appear to be undersized for the population served.

**Discussion of Checklist Answers**

ai-v. The proposed crossing will not generate new population which will increase demand for public services. However, the new crossing would alter routes and access for public safety services, such as fire and police. Implementation of the North Newhall Specific Plan would increase population demanding services. Future roadway connections would further alter access for public safety services. The EIR will evaluate impacts related to access vis a vis the crossing, and will address, in general, impacts to services related to Specific Plan implementation and roadway connections.

**Conclusion**

Impacts related to public services will be addressed further in the EIR.

Issues	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
<b>XIV. RECREATION.</b>				
a. Would the project increase the use of existing neighborhood and regional parks or other recreational facilities such that substantial physical deterioration of the facility would occur or be accelerated?	X			
b. Does the project include recreational facilities or require the construction or expansion of recreational facilities which might have an adverse physical effect on the environment?	X			

**Setting**

Existing recreational facilities are described in the Public Services section.

**Discussion of Checklist Answers**

a-b. The proposed crossing will not impact existing neighborhood or regional parks, or other recreational facilities, since none presently existing in the vicinity of the crossing. However, the population generated by the North Newhall Specific Plan may increase use of existing recreational facilities, and deterioration of existing facilities or construction of new facilities may be required. The EIR will address these issues in general terms.

**Conclusion**

Impacts to recreational facilities will be addressed in the EIR in general terms.

Issues	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
<b>XV. TRANSPORTATION/TRAFFIC</b>				
Would the proposal:				
a. Cause an increase in traffic that is substantial in relation to the existing traffic load and capacity of the street system (i.e., result in a substantial increase in either the number of vehicle trips, the volume to capacity ratio on roads, or congestion at intersections)?	X			
b. Exceed, either individually or cumulatively, a level of service standard established by the county congestion management agency for designated roads or highways?	X			
c. Result in a change in air traffic patterns, including either an increase in traffic levels or a change in location that results in substantial safety risks?				X
d. Substantially increase hazards due to a design feature (e.g., sharp curves of dangerous intersections) or incompatible uses (e.g., farm equipment)?	X			
e. Result in inadequate emergency access?	X			
f. Result in inadequate parking capacity?	X			
g. Conflict with adopted policies, plans, or programs supporting alternative transportation (e.g., bus turnouts, bicycle racks)?	X			

**Setting**

Major roadways serving the project area include I-5, San Fernando Road (Main Street), Newhall Avenue, Lyons Avenue, Railroad Avenue, and the Antelope Valley Freeway (14).

The nearest public airport is located in Burbank, approximately 15 miles from Santa Clarita. The Jan Heidt Metrolink Station 0.25 miles south of the proposed crossing provides access to the regional rail system and commuter service.

**Discussion of Checklist Answers**

a-b. The proposed project would alter the circulation pattern in the area by:

- Closing the existing at-grade crossing at 13<sup>th</sup> Street
- Introducing a new crossing at the current terminus of Lyons Avenue

The CPUC requires traffic analysis for proposals of new at-grade crossings. The CPUC seeks evidence that the introduction of an at-grade crossing will not cause significant deficiencies in the operation of roadways such that motorists would be tempted to engage in unsafe crossings of the tracks. Therefore, the Stage I EIR will include a detailed traffic analysis. The traffic analysis will assume completion of the General Plan circulation network, including the extension of Lyons Avenue/Dockweiler to Via Princesa. Impacts will be analyzed in detail in the EIR.

- c. The project site is not located near a private or public airport. This topic will not be considered further in the EIR.
- d-e. The EIR will analyze impacts associated with potential hazards at the crossing. As mentioned previously, the CPUC is primarily concerned with safety at at-grade crossings. The EIR analysis will provide detail regarding hazards affecting motorists, trains, and pedestrians in the area. The EIR analysis will also address emergency access via the crossing.
- f. The proposed relocation of the crossing does not affect existing parking areas and would not include the development of parking. However, the North Newhall Specific Plan will include parking and development of roadway connections may impact existing parking areas. Impacts to parking will be addressed in general terms in the EIR.
- g. The EIR will address impacts to alternative transportation, including rail, bicycle, and bus traffic in the area resulting from the crossing, and, in general terms, those impacts resulting from the implementation of the North Newhall Specific Plan and roadway connections.

**Conclusion**

Impacts related to traffic operations will be addressed in detail in the EIR. Because there are no public or private airports in the area affected by the project, impacts related to airports will not be considered further in the EIR.

Issues	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
<b>XVI. UTILITIES AND SERVICE SYSTEMS.</b>				
Would the project:				
a. Exceed wastewater treatment requirements of the applicable Regional Water Quality Control Board?	X			
b. Require or result in the construction of new water or wastewater treatment facilities or expansion of existing facilities, the construction of which could cause significant environmental effects?	X			

Issues	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
c. Require or result in the construction of new storm water drainage facilities or expansion of existing facilities, the construction of which could have significant environmental effects?	X			
d. Have sufficient water supplies available to serve the project from existing entitlements and resources, or are new or expanded entitlements necessary?	X			
e. Result in a determination by the wastewater treatment provider which serves or may serve the project that it has adequate capacity to serve the project's projected demand in addition to the provider's existing commitments?	X			
f. Be served by a landfill with sufficient permitted capacity to accommodate the project's solid waste disposal needs?	X			
g. Comply with federal, state, and local statutes and regulations related to solid waste?	X			

## Setting

*Wastewater.* Los Angeles County Sanitation District No. 26 provides wastewater conveyance, treatment, and disposal for the project area. The Valencia Water Reclamation Plant is the treatment/reclamation plant serving the project area.

*Stormwater.* The Santa Clarita Valley contains many natural streams and creeks that function as storm drain channels. These streams and creeks empty into the Santa Clara River, which flows westerly into the Pacific Ocean. The drainage system (both natural and County/City storm drain infrastructure) is adequate to handle the normal precipitation in the region (15 to 19 inches per year). However, abnormal rainfall amounts, as in the case of the 100-year flood event, can strain the system. The General Plan calls for localized channel repairs; cleaning of debris basins; cleaning, widening, and/or lining segments of channels; post-construction BMP maintenance; and culvert maintenance, among other measures to address ongoing deficiencies.

*Potable Water.* Water in the project area comes from a variety of sources. Imported water and groundwater are the primary sources of potable (drinkable) water in the City. Recycled water also contributes to the water supply. Newhall County Water District serves the Newhall area. NCWD provides both local groundwater and Castaic Lake Water Agency (CLWA)-imported water.

*Landfills/Solid Waste.* The Santa Clarita Valley is served primarily by three Class III (nonhazardous) landfills, Chiquita Canyon Landfill, Antelope Valley Landfill, and Sunshine Canyon Landfill. The city exports a majority of its wastes to the Chiquita Canyon Landfill. The city provides a variety of waste management services and waste reduction programs.

### **Discussion of Checklist Answers**

- a. The proposed crossing will not generate wastewater. However, implementation of the North Newhall Specific Plan will increase generation of wastewater. Analysis in the Stage I EIR will include general information about wastewater generation, including impacts to treatment systems, associated with the North Newhall Specific Plan.
- b. The Stage I EIR will evaluate the impact of the crossing on existing water distribution and wastewater collection infrastructure. The EIR analysis will include general information about impacts to infrastructure related to the North Newhall Specific Plan and roadway connections.
- c. The analysis in the EIR will address temporary and long-term impacts to stormwater infrastructure related to the crossing, and will provide a general assessment of impacts to stormwater infrastructure stemming from implementation of the North Newhall Specific Plan and the installation of roadway connections.
- d. The proposed crossing will not be a source of water demand in the long-term. The analysis in the EIR will evaluate in general terms the impacts to water supply from implementation of the North Newhall Specific Plan.
- e. The proposed crossing will not generate wastewater on an ongoing basis. However, implementation of the North Newhall Specific Plan will increase wastewater generation over existing conditions. The EIR will analyze, in general terms, the impacts to wastewater resulting from the Plan implementation.
- f-g. The proposed crossing will not be a source of solid waste in the long term. Short-term, construction activities will generate waste. Development under the North Newhall Specific Plan will be a source of solid waste long term. The EIR will analyze short and long-term sources of waste (the latter in more general terms) and compliance with applicable statutes.

### **Conclusion**

Impacts to utilities will be addressed further in the EIR.

Issues	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
<b>XVII. MANDATORY FINDINGS OF SIGNIFICANCE</b>				
a. Does the project have the potential to degrade the quality of the environment, substantially reduce the habitat of a fish or wildlife species, cause a fish or wildlife species population to drop below self-sustaining levels, threaten to eliminate a plant or animal community, reduce the number or restrict the range of a rare or endangered plant or animal or eliminate important examples of the major periods of California history or prehistory?	X			
b. Does the project have impacts that are individually limited, but cumulatively considerable? (“Cumulatively considerable” means that the incremental effects of a project are considerable when viewed in connection with the effects of past projects, and the effects of probable future projects)	X			
c. Does the project have environmental effects which will cause substantial adverse effects on human beings, either directly or indirectly?	X			

**Conclusion**

The project may have significant impacts related to degradation of environmental quality, cumulatively significant impacts, or impacts to human beings as described elsewhere in this Initial Study.

## DETERMINATION

Pursuant to Sections 15152 and 15168 of the State CEQA Guidelines, this initial study has been prepared to evaluate the potential impacts of the proposed project.

On the basis of this initial evaluation:

- I find that the proposed project **COULD NOT** have a significant effect on the environment, and a **NEGATIVE DECLARATION** will be prepared.
  
- I find that although the proposed project could have a significant effect on the environment, there will not be a significant effect in this case because of the mitigation measures described in the initial study. **A NEGATIVE DECLARATION** will be prepared.
  
- I find that the proposed project **MAY** have a significant effect on the environment, and an **ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT** is required.
  
- I find that the proposed project **MAY** have a significant effect(s) on the environment, but at least one effect 1) has been adequately analyzed in an earlier document pursuant to applicable legal standards, and 2) has been addressed by mitigation measures based on the earlier analysis as described on attached sheets, if the effect is a “potentially significant impact” or “potentially significant unless mitigated.” An **ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT** is required, but it must analyze only the effects that remain to be addressed.
  
- I find that although the proposed project could have a significant effect on the environment, there **WILL NOT** be a significant effect in this case because all potentially significant effects (a) have been analyzed adequately in an earlier EIR pursuant to applicable standards and (b) have been avoided or mitigated pursuant to that earlier EIR, including revisions or mitigation measures that are imposed upon the proposed project.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Jason Smisko

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

Community Development Department

## **CITATIONS**

City of Santa Clarita. June 1991. *Santa Clarita General Plan*.

SCAQMD Website: <http://www.aqmd.gov/smog/historicaldata.htm>

Downtown Newhall Specific Plan EIR. 2006

## **LIST OF PREPARERS**

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