6.0 ALTERNATIVES

INTRODUCTION

This section of the EIR provides a comparative analysis of the merits of alternatives to the proposed project pursuant to Section 15126.6 of the *California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines*, as amended. The purpose of the alternatives analysis is to identify potentially feasible ways to avoid or substantially lessen significant effects of the project. According to the *State CEQA Guidelines*, an EIR needs to examine a reasonable range of alternatives to a project, or its location, which would feasibly meet most of the basic objectives of the project while avoiding or substantially lessening significant impacts. When addressing feasibility, the *State CEQA Guidelines* Section 15126.6 states that "[a]mong the factors that may be taken into account when addressing the feasibility of alternatives are site suitability, economic viability, availability of infrastructure, general plan consistency, other plans or regulatory limitations, jurisdictional boundaries (projects with a regionally significant impact should consider the regional context), and whether the applicant can reasonably acquire, control or otherwise have access to the alternative site (or the site is already owned by the proponent)." The *State CEQA Guidelines* also specify that the alternatives discussion should not be remote or speculative, and need not be presented in the same level of detail as the assessment of the proposed project.

Therefore, based on the *State CEQA Guidelines*, several factors need to be considered in determining the range of alternatives to be analyzed in an EIR and the level of analytical detail that should be provided for each alternative. These factors include (1) the nature of the significant impacts of the proposed project; (2) the ability of alternatives to avoid or substantially lessen the significant impacts associated with the project; (3) the ability of the alternatives to meet the objectives of the project; and (4) the feasibility of the alternatives. These factors are unique for each project. Each alternative selected for evaluation in this EIR is described below and followed by a comparative analysis.

PROJECT OBJECTIVES

Key objectives of the proposed project are to:

- implement the goals of the Circulation Element of the Santa Clarita General Plan, including connectivity between Golden Valley Road and Rainbow Glen Drive;
- improve local access to residential and commercial areas within the City of Santa Clarita;
- improve roadway level of service and the circulation network;
- promote opportunities for new development by extending needed infrastructure systems;

- help close a gap segment in the City's planned roadway system; and
- reduce vehicle miles traveled by creating a more direct route for motorists, eliminating circuitous driving patterns.

ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

An EIR must briefly describe the rationale for selection and rejection of alternatives. The lead agency may make an initial determination as to which alternatives are feasible, and therefore merit in-depth consideration. Alternatives considered include a range of potential projects to meet the applicant's objectives while eliminating or reducing significant environmental impacts identified in **Section 4.0, Environmental Impact Analysis**.

Alternatives considered include the following:

Alternative 1: No Project Alternative - the eastward extension of Via Princessa between Golden Valley Road and the existing roadway terminus near Sheldon Avenue would not occur. Under the No Project Alternative, the proposed project would not be constructed.

Alternative 2: Robert C. Lee Parkway Alternative – under this alternative the east extension of Via Princessa would connect at the cul-de-sac of Robert C. Lee Parkway. Robert C. Lee Parkway would extend north, paralleling the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power (LADWP) transmission lines to connect at the existing Via Princessa terminus near Sheldon Avenue, as shown on **Figure 6.0-1, Conceptual Alignment of Robert C. Lee Parkway Alternative**. The length of the Robert C. Lee Parkway alternative would be approximately 0.5 mile. The proposed roadway would consist of a six-lane facility with a 14-foot raised landscaped median, a 10-foot sidewalk/parkway on each side, and a 12-foot two-lane bike path along the south side. The vehicle lanes adjacent to the median would be 12 feet wide, the middle lanes would be 11 feet wide, and the right lanes would be 12 feet wide. The typical right-of-way width would be 116 feet (similar features to the proposed project).

The portion of Via Princessa between Sheldon Avenue and Rainbow Glen Drive would be completed by constructing the south side of the roadway (similar to the proposed project).

Legend:

Robert C. Lee Parkway Alternative

SOURCE: City of Santa Clarita - 2011

FIGURE **6.0-1**

Conceptual Alignment of Robert C. Lee Parkway Alternative

ALTERNATIVE IMPACT ANALYSIS

This subsection provides a comparison of the impacts of these alternatives and the proposed project for those environmental issues addressed in this document. In all cases, the comparison of impacts assumes that all feasible mitigation measures identified in this document would be implemented for the impacts resulting from the alternatives. Similarly, in all cases where it can be safely assumed that there are feasible mitigation measures for impacts caused by the alternative, it is assumed that those mitigation measures would be implemented. In accordance with the *State CEQA Guidelines*, the discussion of the environmental effects of the alternatives may be less detailed than that provided for the proposed project.[1]

Alternative 1: No Project Alternative

Section 15126(2)(4) of the *State CEQA Guidelines* requires evaluation of the No Project Alternative. Specifically, the analysis must examine the impacts which might occur if the site is left in its present condition, as well as what may reasonably be expected to occur in the foreseeable future if the project were not approved, based on current plans and consistent with available infrastructure and community services. The eastward extension of Via Princessa between Golden Valley Road and the existing roadway terminus near Sheldon Avenue would not occur.

Potential Environmental Impacts

Air Quality

The No Project Alternative would continue existing operations and the City would not extend Via Princessa to the east. As such, the No Project Alternative would not result in construction emissions and would have no construction-related impacts on air quality. As there would be no construction, localized construction emissions would not exist and the No Project Alternative would not result in significant and unavoidable impacts. The No Project Alternative would result in no new additional maintenance or operational vehicle trips. No operational-related impacts on air quality. Consequently, the No Project Alternative would result in fewer air quality impacts when compared to the proposed project.

Biota

The No Project Alternative would not extend Via Princessa from Sheldon Avenue west towards Golden Valley Road. As there would be no construction there would be no loss of vernal pool habitat and vernal

1 California Public Resources Code, Title 14, Division 6, Chapter 3, *California Environmental Quality Act Guidelines*, Section 15126.6(d).

pool dependent species or significant and unavoidable impacts to biological resources. Therefore, the No Project Alternative would avoid significant impacts and result in fewer impacts when compared to the proposed project.

Cultural Resources

The No Project Alternative would continue to operate under existing conditions. There would be no construction or grading, and as a result, there would be no potential impacts to archaeological resources, paleontological resources, or human remains. Impacts would be fewer under the No Project Alternative when compared to the proposed project.

Geology and Soils

Under the No Project Alternative, the hillside and terrain between Golden Valley Road and Sheldon Avenue would remain intact. As a result, there would be no grading or excavating activities within the site and therefore, no potential for geological impacts. The No Project Alternative would result in fewer impacts when compared to the proposed project.

Global Climate Change

The No Project Alternative would not extend Via Princessa to the east. As such, the No Project Alternative would not result in construction greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and would have no construction-related impacts on GHGs. The No Project Alternative would result in no new additional maintenance or operational vehicle trips and consequently no new operational area GHG emissions. The No Project Alternative would result in fewer impacts when compared to the proposed project.

Human-Made Hazards

The No Project Alternative would not involve construction or grading within the project area, nor would it involve transportation of hazardous materials. As a result, the No Project Alternative would result fewer impacts when compared to the proposed project.

Hydrology and Water Quality

Under the No Project Alternative, existing drainage patterns and runoff amounts would remain unchanged. Impacts would therefore be fewer under the No Project Alternative when compared to the proposed project.

Land Use

The No Project Alternative would not construct an east-west roadway connection through the City. The No Project would not conflict with existing local plans, policies, or regulations. As a result, the No Project Alternative would result in similar land use impacts when compared to the proposed project.

Noise

With the No Project Alternative, temporary noise impacts during construction would be avoided. No new increases in noise from mobile sources would occur with the No Project Alternative. As such, potential construction related noise impacts under the No Project Alternative would be fewer when compared to the proposed project.

Transportation and Circulation

With the No Project Alternative, the existing (2010) conditions for the surrounding project area roadways would continue to operate under acceptable level of service (LOS) conditions.[2] However, the existing roadway circulation system would remain in place. Future interim conditions (10 to 15 years from the present) would result in unacceptable impacts to the volume to capacity (v/c) and the LOS to Golden Valley Road south of Via Princessa, Sierra Highway south of Golden Valley Road, and Golden Valley Road south of Center Pointe Parkway. The projected areawide circulation is expected to increase with a projected increase in growth. The LOS for the intersections of Rainbow Glen Drive/Via Princessa and Gregory Lane/Via Princessa would operate under acceptable conditions in the interim year. As the No Project Alternative would operate under unacceptable LOS conditions for the roadways identified above, traffic and circulation impacts would be greater when compared to the proposed project.

Visual Resources

There would be no construction between Sheldon Avenue and Golden Valley Road. No grading would occur on the hillside and there would be no additional nighttime lighting, such as traffic signals and streetlights. Consequently, the No Project Alternative would result in fewer visual impacts when compared to the proposed project.

Relationship to Project Objectives

A summary comparison of impacts associated with the project alternatives is provided in **Table 6.0-1, Comparison of Alternatives to the Proposed Project** (shown later in this section).

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2 An acceptable level of service for roadways is considered D or higher.

Generally, the No Project Alternative would result in fewer impacts than those evaluated for the proposed project, except for transportation and circulation impacts.

While the No Project Alternative is generally considered environmentally superior to the proposed project, it does not meet any of the project objectives including:

- Implement the goals of the Circulation Element of the Santa Clarita General Plan, including connectivity between Golden Valley Road and Rainbow Glen Drive;

There would be no roadway connection between Golden Valley Road and Rainbow Glen Drive. As such the No Project Alternative would not implement goals of the Circulation Element of the General Plan.

- Improve local access to residential and commercial areas within the City of Santa Clarita;

There would be no additional roadway construction with implementation of the No Project Alternative. Therefore, access to residential and commercial areas would not be improved within the City.

- Improve roadway level of service and the circulation network;

The No Project Alternative would not improve the local circulation network in the near future. Unacceptable levels of service along Golden Valley Road and Sierra Highway would occur with the No Project Alternative.

- Promote opportunities for new development by extending needed infrastructure systems;

The No Project Alternative would not develop or extend needed infrastructure systems.

- Help close a gap segment in the City's planned roadway system; and

The No Project Alternative would not development additional roadway improvements called out in the City's General Plan. As such, it would not close a gap segment in the City's planned roadway system.

- Reduce vehicle miles traveled by creating a more direct route for motorists, eliminating circuitous driving patterns.

The No Project Alternative would not construct or extend additional roadways within the City. Consequently, the No Project Alternative would not reduce vehicle miles traveled because circuitous driving patterns would not be eliminated.

Alternative 2: Robert C. Lee Parkway Alternative

Under the Robert C. Lee Parkway Alternative, the east extension of Via Princessa would connect at the cul-de-sac of Robert C. Lee Parkway. Robert C. Lee Parkway would extend north, paralleling the Los

Angeles Department of Water and Power (LADWP) transmission lines to connect at the existing Via Princessa terminus near Sheldon Avenue, as shown on **Figure 6.0-1**. The length of the Robert C. Lee Parkway Alternative would be approximately 0.5 mile.

Environmental Impacts

Air Quality

Under the Robert C. Lee Parkway Alternative (Alternative 2), Robert C. Lee Parkway would be extended north to connect to Via Princessa. The conceptual length of Alternative 2 is shorter (approximately 0.5 mile in length) when compared to the proposed project (1.2 miles in length). Construction emissions would be reduced when compared to the proposed project, thus potentially resulting in fewer construction emissions. The conceptual route of Alternative 2 would involve construction activities adjacent to sensitive receptors (schools and residential land uses). Alternative 2 would be located near Golden Valley High School, residential uses east of Robert C. Lee Parkway, and residential uses north of Via Princessa near Sheldon Avenue. Similar to the proposed project, to the distance of construction activities near sensitive receptors, emissions would temporarily exceed the localized ambient concentration thresholds for PM10 and PM2.5. Consequently, Alternative 2 would result in similar air quality impacts when compared to the proposed project.

Biota

Under the Alternative 2, the conceptual design, route, and length of the roadway would be reduced, as shown in **Figure 6.0-1**. Construction and grading of Alternative 2 would be similar in nature to the proposed project due to the topographical nature of the area. Due to the construction and grading of Alternative 2, there would be similar impacts to riparian habitat, wildlife and California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG) and United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) jurisdictional areas. The proposed route of Alternative 2 would also result in similar indirect impacts, such as increased lighting and glare and increased landscaping irrigation and human activity, when compared to the proposed project.

However, the design and route of Alternative 2 would avoid the loss of vernal pool habitat and vernal pool-dependent species. As such, Alternative 2 would avoid a significant and unavoidable impact and would result in fewer biological resource impacts when compared to the proposed project.

Cultural Resources

Alternative 2 would result in construction activities involving earthmoving, which could potentially impact unknown subsurface cultural resources. The disturbance area of Alternative 2 may affect less area than the proposed project. To the extent that the disturbance would be required under Alternative 2, the potential to encounter subsurface cultural resources would be fewer than the proposed project. However, mitigation, as identified for the proposed project, would still be applicable. Therefore, Alternative 2 would result in fewer cultural impacts when compared to the proposed project.

Geology and Soils

Alternative 2 would result in construction activities involving earthmoving and grading of over 100,000 cubic yards of soil. To the extent that the disturbance area would be smaller than the proposed project, the potential grading area would be fewer than the proposed project. However, mitigation, as identified for the proposed project, would still be applicable. Therefore, Alternative 2 would result in fewer geology and soils impacts when compared to the proposed project.

Global Climate Change

Under the Robert C. Lee Parkway Alternative, Via Princessa would be extended south to connect to Robert C. Lee Parkway, as shown in **Figure 6.0-1**. The area of potential disturbance for Alternative 2 would be reduced when compared to the proposed project. As such, Alternative 2 would result in fewer construction-related GHG emissions than the proposed project. The vehicular traffic under Alternative 2 would be similar to the proposed project and would therefore result in similar operational GHG emissions. Thus, Alternative 2 would generate fewer GHG emissions when compared to the proposed project.

Human-Made Hazards

The Robert C. Lee Parkway Alternative would reduce the area of disturbance. Alterative 2 would not involve the transport, use, or disposal of hazardous materials, similar to the proposed project. Database searches of the project area did not identify any conditions that would affect construction of the area. As a result, the Robert C. Lee Parkway Alternative would result in similar man-made hazard impacts when compared to the proposed project.

Hydrology and Water Quality

The proposed stormwater drainage system for the Alternative 2 would consist of curb and gutters, catch basins, and storm drain culverts crossing the proposed Via Princessa extension, similar to the proposed

project. Implementation of the proposed drainage system and compliance with state and local regulations would effectively regulate flow, velocity, and quality of stormwater runoff from the site. As a result, impacts under Alternative 2 related to drainage patterns, watercourses, erosion, and water quality would be similar to the proposed project.

Land Use

The Robert C. Lee Parkway Alternative would be constructed generally within the same project area as the proposed project. The design and implementation of the Robert C. Lee Parkway Alternative would deviate from the existing Circulation Map of the City's Circulation Element. In order for the alignment to be consistent with the City of Santa Clarita General Plan Circulation Element, a General Plan Amendment would be required. Consequently, the Robert C. Lee Parkway Alternative would result in greater land use impacts when compared to the proposed project.

Noise

The Robert C. Lee Parkway Alternative would be constructed adjacent to sensitive receptors such as residential units and Golden Valley High School. The noise generated during construction would result in similar impacts to the proposed project. Construction related noise impacts would remain significant and unavoidable under Alternative 2. The design of the Robert C. Lee Parkway would be similar to the proposed project. The Robert C. Lee Parkway extension design would result in similar increases in vehicular noise when compared to the proposed project. Consequently, the Robert C. Lee Parkway Alternative would result in similar noise impacts when compared to the proposed project.

Transportation and Circulation

With the Robert C. Lee Parkway Alternative, the design of the roadway extension would be similar to the proposed project. Future traffic volumes along Alternative 2 would be similar to that of the proposed project and intersection delays east of Sheldon Avenue along Via Princessa would also be similar to the proposed project.

However, the proposed route of Alternative 2 would result in slightly different traffic patterns for the area. For example, travelers heading in a southeast direction would utilize the alternative alignment to reach Sierra Highway. Conversely, traffic heading in the northwest direction, towards Golden Valley Road and Soledad Canyon, would not use this alternative alignment.

Under the Robert C. Lee Parkway Alternative, vehicular ingress/egress to Golden Valley High School, and the adjacent residential land uses east of the high school, may result in a potential impact as a result

of through traffic. Therefore, the disruption in school ingress/egress would potentially result in greater localized circulation impacts when compared to the proposed project.

Visual Resources

Under the Robert C. Lee Parkway Alternative, construction and hillside grading of the project area would occur. The hillside disturbance would significantly alter the ridgeline within the immediate area and would visually change the character of the site from open space to urban. Alternative 2 would still introduce sources of additional outdoor illumination similar to the proposed project. Consequently, the Robert C. Lee Parkway Alternative would result in similar visual impacts when compared to the proposed project.

Relationship to Project Objectives

A summary comparison of impacts associated with the project alternatives is provided in **Table 5.0-1,** (shown later in this section).

Generally, the Robert C. Lee Parkway would result in similar impacts to air quality, man-made hazards, hydrology and water quality, noise and visual resources. The alignment of Robert C. Lee Parkway Alternative is different from the alignment illustrated in the City's Circulation Element. Therefore, Alternative 2 would require a General Plan Amendment to the Circulation Element, which would result in greater land use impacts when compared to the proposed project. Alternative 2 would also have the potential to result in greater Golden Valley High School ingress/egress impacts when compared to the proposed project.

The Robert C. Lee Parkway would result in fewer impacts to cultural resources, geology and soils, global climate change, and biota as the conceptual design would avoid a significant and unavoidable impact to vernal pools and vernal-pool dependent species.

While the Robert C. Lee Parkway Alternative is generally considered environmentally superior to the proposed project, it does not meet all of the project objectives including:

- Implement the goals of the Circulation Element of the Santa Clarita General Plan, including connectivity between Golden Valley Road and Rainbow Glen Parkway;

The Robert C. Lee Parkway Alternative would change the alignment designated in the City's Circulation Element. As a result, the alternative would be required to obtain a General Plan Amendment.

ENVIRONMENTALLY SUPERIOR ALTERNATIVE

The findings of the alternatives impact analysis discussed above are summarized in **Table 6.0-1, Comparison of Alternatives to the Proposed Project**.

State CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.6(e)(2) requires an EIR to identify an environmentally superior alternative among those evaluated in an EIR. Of the alternatives considered in this section, the No Project Alternative is environmentally superior to the other alternatives, because this alternative would not create any environmental impacts.

According to the *State CEQA Guidelines* if the No Project Alternative is identified as the environmentally superior alternative, the EIR shall also identify an environmentally superior alternative among the other alternatives. Alternative 2 would result in similar or incrementally fewer impacts for most issues when compared to the proposed project. In particular, the Robert C. Lee Parkway Alternative would have fewer impacts with respect to cultural resources, geology and soils, global climate change and biota including the avoidance of a significant and unavoidable impact to vernal pools and vernal-pool related species.

However, the potential for traffic hazards travelling through the project area adjacent to Golden Valley High School would be greater than that of the proposed project.

As discussed above, by developing Alternative 2, as opposed to the proposed project, the City would not achieve the following objective to the same extent as the proposed project:

- Implement the goals of the Circulation Element of the Santa Clarita General Plan, including connectivity between Golden Valley Road and Rainbow Glen Drive;

Therefore, Alternative 2 is environmentally superior to the proposed project.

Table 6.0-1
Comparison of Alternatives to the Proposed Project

Environmental Topic	Proposed Project (After Mitigation)	Alternative 1: No Project	Alternative 2: Robert C. Lee Parkway
Air Quality	Significant & Unavoidable	Fewer Impacts	Similar Impacts
Biota	Significant & Unavoidable	Fewer Impacts	Fewer Impacts
Cultural Resources	Less than Significant	Fewer Impacts	Fewer Impacts
Geology and Soils	Less than Significant	Fewer Impacts	Fewer Impacts
Global Climate Change	Less than Significant	Fewer Impacts	Fewer Impacts
Human-Made Hazards	Less than Significant	Fewer Impacts	Similar Impacts
Hydrology and Water Quality	Less than Significant	Fewer Impacts	Similar Impacts
Land Use	No Impacts	Similar Impacts	Greater Impacts
Noise	Significant & Unavoidable Construction Impacts	Fewer Impacts	Similar Impacts
Transportation and Circulation	Less than Significant	Greater Impacts	Greater Impacts
Visual Resources	Significant & Unavoidable	Fewer Impacts	Similar Impacts