9.0 SIGNIFICANT IRREVERSIBLE ENVIRONMENTAL CHANGES

PURPOSE

Section 15126.2(c) of the *California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines* states that use of nonrenewable resources during the initial and continued phases of a proposed project may be irreversible if a large commitment of these resources makes their removal, indirect removal, or non-use thereafter unlikely. This section of the environmental impact report (EIR) evaluates whether the proposed project would result in the irretrievable commitment of resources or cause irreversible changes in the environment. Also, in accordance with Section 15126.2 of the *State CEQA Guidelines*, this section identifies any irreversible damage that could result from environmental accidents associated with the proposed project.

IRREVERSIBLE COMMITMENT OF RESOURCES

Construction and operation of the proposed project would contribute to the incremental depletion of resources, including renewable and nonrenewable resources. Resources such as water (i.e., dust suppression), are generally considered renewable resources. Such resources would be replenished over the lifetime of the project. For example, water supplies are replenished as water is redistributed through the action of the hydrologic cycle. However, the proposed project would only use such resources as water for dust suppression during grading activities. Project operation would not continue to diminish water resources. As such, the development of the project would not result in the irreversible commitment of renewable resources.

Nonrenewable resources, such as natural gas, petroleum products, asphalt, petrochemical construction materials, steel and other metals, and sand and gravel, are considered to be commodities, which are available in a finite supply. The processes that created these resources occur over a long period. Therefore, the replacement of these resources would not occur over the life of the project. To varying degrees, the aforementioned materials are all readily available and some materials, such as asphalt or sand and gravel, are abundant. Other commodities such as metals, natural gas, and petroleum products are also readily available but are finite in supply given the length of time required by the natural process to create them.

The demand for all such resources is expected to increase regardless of whether the project is developed. According to the Southern California Association of Government's *Regional Growth Forecast 2005–2035*, the population of the City of Santa Clarita would increase from 167,185 to 239,923 over the 30-year period

between 2005 and 2035, or by about 44 percent. This increase in population will directly result in the need for more infrastructure projects, retail facilities, and commercial facilities in order to provide the needed services associated with this growth. If not consumed by future projects, these resources would likely be committed to other residential, commercial, public service, or industrial projects in the region intended to meet this anticipated growth. Furthermore, the investment of resources in the project would be typical of the level of investment normally required for roadway infrastructure improvements of this scale. Provided that all standard building codes are followed, no wasteful use of energy or construction resources is anticipated. Additionally, these resources would only be used once during the construction of the project. After that time, resources would not be consumed.

IRREVERSIBLE ENVIRONMENTAL CHANGES

The proposed project would redirect existing local and regional vehicular traffic. Consequently, no additional increase in air quality impacts and noise emissions would be generated upon completion of the project. However, design features (i.e., energy efficient lighting) have been incorporated into the development proposal and mitigation measures are proposed in this EIR that would minimize or avoid the significant effects of the environmental changes associated with the development of the project to the greatest degree feasible.

POTENTIAL ENVIRONMENTAL DAMAGE FROM ACCIDENTS

The project proposes no uniquely hazardous uses and its operation would not be expected to cause environmental accidents that would affect other areas.

The project site is located within a seismically active region and would be exposed to ground shaking during a seismic event. Conformance with the regulatory provisions of the City of Santa Clarita and the California Building Code criteria pertaining to construction standards would minimize damage to the extent feasible in the event of such an occurrence.