

# NOTICE OF PREPARATION (NOP) SUMMARY REPORT

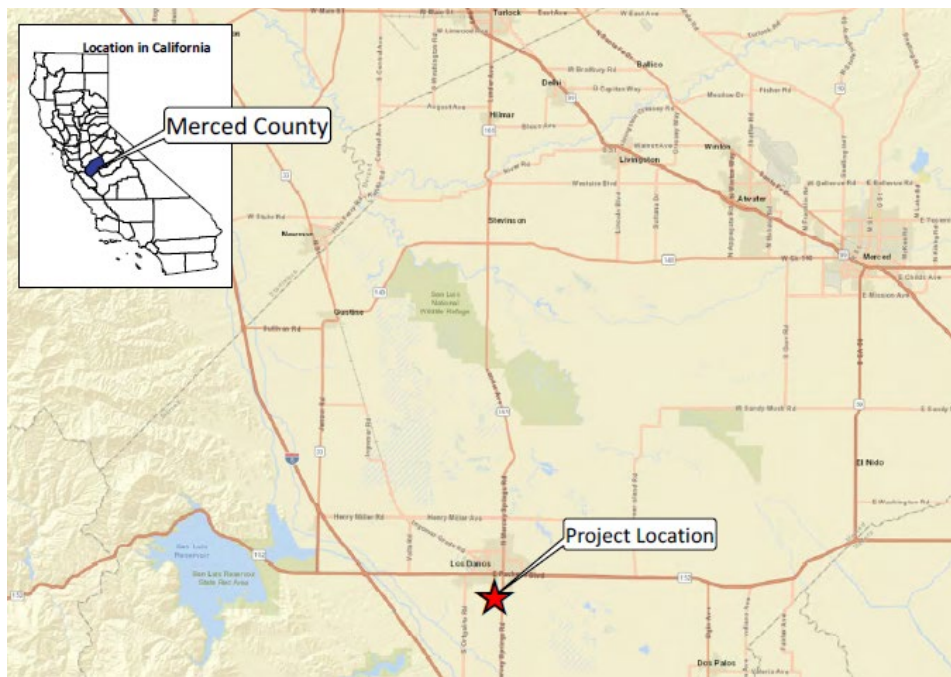
## PIONEER ROAD COMPLETE STREETS PROJECT

April 12, 2023

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The City of Los Banos (City) proposes to improve Pioneer Road into an approximately 6.5-mile-long, arterial road with a Class I multi-use path. The project is located in the City of Los Banos, with a portion in unincorporated Merced County (see Figure 1: Regional Location and Figure 2: Project Location)

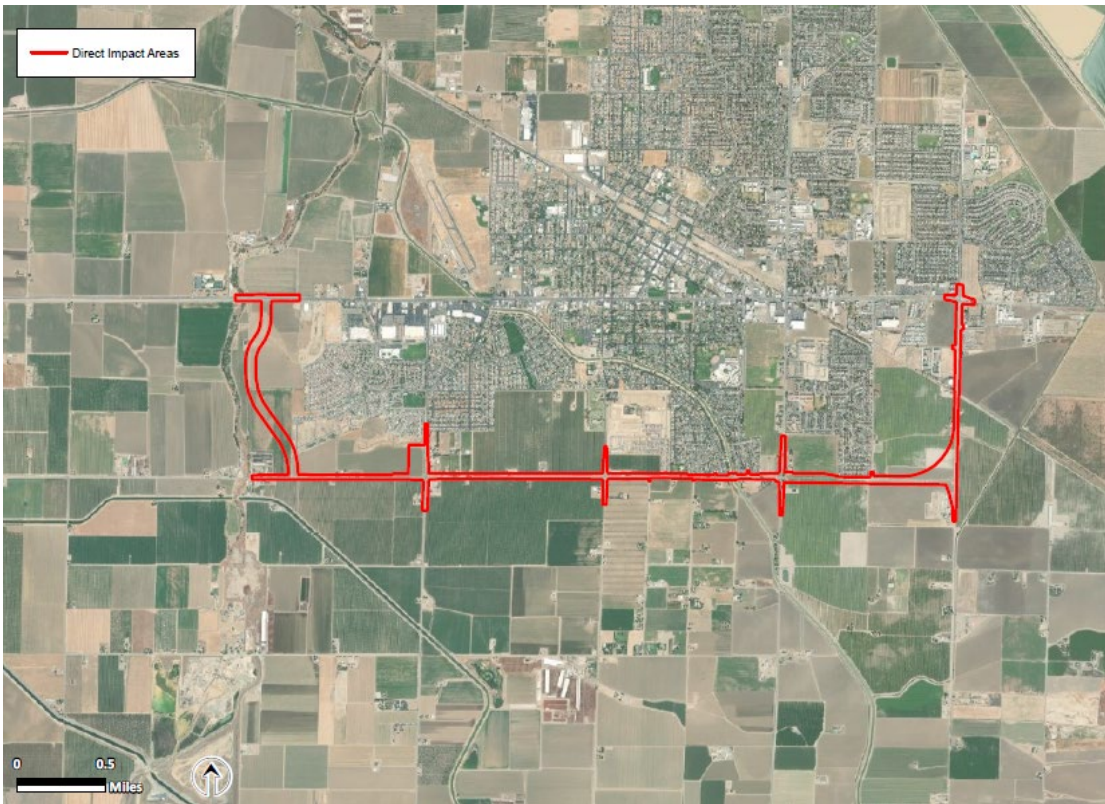
Figure 1: Regional Location



### Project History

The Pioneer Road Complete Streets project had its beginnings with the 2009 Los Banos General Plan, which designated Pioneer Road to be a four-lane arterial street to accommodate future growth in the city. In 2019 the City received a grant from the Caltrans Sustainable Transportation Planning Grant Program to prepare two plans, for State Route 152 (SR-152) and for Pioneer Road. These plans including goals for reducing congestion and making better multimodal connections in the east-west direction for community members. Both plans were created with extensive community and stakeholder input. In January 2021, the Los Banos City Council accepted the Pioneer Road Complete Streets Plan as a reference document. The Plan contained a vision, proposed project alignments, and preliminary concepts, and these recommendations set the foundation for this phase of the project.

Figure 2: Project Location



### Proposed Project

The City proposes to construct an approximately 6.5-mile-long, arterial road with a Class I multi-use trail. The proposed road would begin on the west side of the City at a new signalized intersection on SR-152 approximately 1,700 feet east of the Merced College entrance and east of the Los Banos Creek. From this new intersection, East of Creek Road would be constructed south to Pioneer Road. Roadway improvements would then continue east along the existing Pioneer Road past SR-165 (Merced Springs Road). East of SR-165, Pioneer Road would be extended to connect with the existing Ward Road. The project improvements would continue north along Ward Road ending at the existing SR-152/Ward Road signalized intersection.

The entire length of the project would include a 10-foot-wide Class I multi-use trail and the installation of streetlights. A multi-use path is a paved pathway, separated from vehicle traffic, that accommodates both pedestrians and bicyclists. Bridge improvements are proposed where Pioneer Road crosses over the Main Canal of the Central California Irrigation District.

Improvements would be required on California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) right-of-way (ROW) at the SR-152/East of Creek Road intersection, the SR-152/Ward Road

intersection, and the SR-165 (Merced Springs Road)/Pioneer Road intersection. Improvements within Caltrans ROW would be designed to Caltrans Standards. Additional signalized intersections would include the future East of Creek Road/Pioneer Road intersection, Ortigalita Road/Pioneer Road intersection, and Center Road/Pioneer Road intersection. Improvements outside of Caltrans ROW would be designed per City Standards. ROW acquisitions and temporary construction easements (TCEs) would be required to accommodate the proposed improvements. Utilities relocation/removal would potentially be required to accommodate proposed improvements. Excavation to five feet would be needed throughout the project alignment for pavement improvements with deeper excavation needed for the drainage basins, traffic signals, streetlights, and the Main Canal bridge foundations.

The Pioneer Road Complete Streets Project will have an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) prepared for the project to address the potential environmental impacts associated with the project, as required by the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). As part of that process, a Notice of Preparation (NOP) was prepared, and public comments were solicited during January and February 2023. In addition, a public scoping meeting was held on February 7, 2023.

Following is a description of the scoping process and a summary of comments received.

## 2. PUBLIC SCOPING

### Notice of Public Scoping

The City prepared a NOP of the Draft EIR in January 2023 (See **Attachment A**, Notice of Preparation). In support of the public scoping for the NOP, the City initiated the process to gather written comments on January 19<sup>th</sup>, 2023 and concluded the public commenting period on February 17, 2023.

The City began preparation for the public commenting period in October 2022. To ensure maximum engagement, the City developed a Public Engagement Plan which identified the outreach strategies to engage the community in the public scoping process. As a part of the Public Engagement Plan, the City developed a stakeholders contact list. The contact list included community members who expressed interest for the previous Pioneer Road Complete Streets Plan, community stakeholders such as the Los Banos Unified School District and Merced College, local and county elected officials, city commissioners, and relevant agencies and organizations such as the Merced County Association of Governments, Central California Irrigation District, California Department of Fish and Wildlife, and Cultiva Salud.

The City conducted the following efforts to notify the public:

- 1) Newspaper announcement: The City prepared a news release that was shared with the Westside Express to announce the public commenting effort for the project. The Westside Express is a local news institution, and it posted an article about the project on January 18<sup>th</sup>, 2023.

- 2) Project webpage: The City hosted a webpage for the Pioneer Road Complete Streets Project on its website which contained information about the public commenting period and an invitation to the public scoping meeting.
- 3) E-blast: On January 19, 2023, the City sent out an e-blast to 78 members on the stakeholders contact list.
- 4) Physical mailers: The City sent out physical mailers to property owners that live along the project site. Physical mailers were sent out on January 20, 2023.
- 5) Social media: On January 20, 2023, the City shared information to gather public comments on its Facebook page.

To engage with the City's large Spanish-speaking population, the project website and physical mailers were available in both English and Spanish. An example of the notification materials is available in **Attachment B**, Flyer.

### 2.1 Public Scoping Meeting

On Tuesday, February 7, 2023, the City hosted the Scoping Meeting to gather public comments to scope the Draft EIR. The event was held at the Los Banos Community Center (645 7th St, Los Banos, CA 93635) from 6:00 p.m. to approximately 8:00 p.m. Other members of the project team joined City staff, including representatives from Mark Thomas, GPA Consulting, and PlaceWorks.

At the Scoping Meeting community members were shown a PowerPoint presentation which provided an overview of the project, project background, the CEQA process, and project delivery process. After the presentation, community members had opportunities to view display boards and engage with the project team to ask clarification questions. Community members were encouraged to submit written comments via comment cards.

In total, 22 members of the public attended the event, where they submitted 11 comment cards. Copies of the public scoping materials, including sign-in sheet, PowerPoint presentation, and comment cards are attached in **Attachment C**, Public Meeting Materials, while **Attachment D** contains photos from the meeting.

### 2.2 Public Comments

During the public comment period, the City received a total of 18 comments, 7 of which were received through email. A summary of the comments received is included in **Table 1**, List of Public Comments. **Attachment E** contains comments received via email.