



**MEETING SUMMARY**  
**Sheldon/Wilton Working Group**  
**Meeting #3**  
**June 24, 2009**

**Sheldon/Wilton Working Group Members**

Richard Bisnett (absent)	Shirley Peters
June Coats	Russ Shields
Tom Franzoia	Tom Shine
Bill Kutzer (absent)	Barbara Washburn
Bill Myers	

Tom Zlotkowski, Executive Director, Capital SouthEast Connector  
Bob Cermak, Parsons Brinkerhoff  
Gene Endicott, Facilitator  
Michele McCormick, Facilitator  
Pam Johns, Resource Consultant (absent)  
Sara Eisenberg, Meeting Scribe  
Diane Nguyen, City of Elk Grove ASAC Member

**Subject Matter Experts**

Vicki Axiaq, ICF Jones & Stokes  
Peggy Lee, ICF Jones & Stokes  
Eva Begley, Caltrans  
Steve Propst, Caltrans  
John Webb, Caltrans

**1) Welcome and Introductions**

The meeting was held at the Connector JPA office in Mather. Group members, consultants and experts introduced themselves and the meeting began.

**2) Review of June 10 Meeting: Land Use and Traffic Projections**

Ms. McCormick recapped the June 10 meeting with two main points:

1. One meeting was not enough to cover traffic and land use issues, so John Long will be back at the next meeting (July 15) to continue the discussion.
2. The group discussed what they would like to address in terms of environmental aspects of the project, which lead to the experts present at this meeting.

Mr. Zlotkowski added that the first traffic/land use meeting was a conceptual discussion, while the second meeting will include more detail. The group will begin looking at potential engineering solutions and discuss different aspects of refining those solutions. It was also noted that the group would like John Long to provide some information about traffic and land use projections changing, now and in the near future, due to the economy.

It was agreed that Dillard Road, and impacts on roads other than the proposed Connector alignments, will continue to be included as part of the overall roadway evaluation process.

It was also agreed that the next meeting, and all future meetings, will include an agenda item for group members to share feedback and concerns they hear from community members.

### **3) Environmental Process and Agency Coordination**

Vicki Axiaq of ICF Jones & Stokes provided an overview of the project's process in regard to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). It is anticipated that the Connector will develop a joint document that includes both the Environmental Impact Report (EIR, to address CEQA) and Environmental Impact Statement (EIS, to address NEPA). The Connector will seek money from the Federal Government, so it is required to develop both documents. The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) will be the lead agency on the EIS, with Caltrans being the hands-on manager of the process; the Connector JPA will be the lead agency on the EIR.

The environmental process begins with notices sent to the public and resource agencies interested in the project, alerting them that the project has been proposed and technical studies will be developed. This notice starts the scoping process and acts as an invitation to participate in that process. Resource agencies will review the project details, determine what resources are affected by the project and provide input into many elements of the project. Those elements include the project's Purpose and Need statement, input on the criteria for screening alternatives and participating in the alternative selection process.

Technical studies are the main element of the environmental process. Those conducting the studies will take all of the information gathered from the public and resource agencies, as well as the proposed design and alternatives, and study what resources are in the area and how the project may impact them. The studies follow a very specific format and are the basis of the draft environmental documents (DEIR, DEIS). The draft version of the combined Connector DEIR/DEIS will be made available for public review and comment. Those comments will be taken into consideration when the JPA makes a decision on the final project.

It is anticipated that the Connector will conduct a Tier 1 review, which is more of a study of the entire corridor than any specific alignment. Mr. Zlotkowski noted that there is the possibility of also conducting a Tier 2 analysis, which is specific to one alignment in a specific area, if one of the member jurisdictions expresses interest in proceeding with a section of the project before it is approved in its entirety.

The environmental documents will evaluate a number of things. One item is traffic, which will be based on the Federal Highway Improvement Plan (which is based on State plans and plans from regional transportation districts). The Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) developed by SACOG will be key, and Ms. Axiaq noted it will be important to be consistent with the assumptions used in the MTP.

Caltrans was represented by three experts. Steve Propst assists cities and counties with federal funding aspects of projects; John Webb heads the Environmental Division; and

Eva Begley is a senior resource biologist. Webb noted that it is a highly complex process when federal funds are involved, and that Caltrans will help the Connector develop a good solution that will result in a good project.

The group discussed the possibility of reviewing recent projects that are similar to the Connector to provide a frame of reference for how various environmental impacts were addressed: storm water runoff, habitat preservation, construction impacts, etc. It would also help the group determine more clearly what the Connector plans could include and provide context for evaluating alternatives. Various projects were mentioned as possibilities, not in their entirety, but for different aspects: Highway 65 bypassing Lincoln; Highway 70 bypassing Nicklaus; Placerville operational improvement project; Willits bypass (a not-so-successful example).

Ms. Axiaq provided details about a project in Southern California that was a federally funded corridor project, mostly along existing roads. One portion crossed an area with virgin vernal pools and the local agencies were strongly supportive of that alternative; resource agencies were adamantly against it. A new proposed alternative went through a heavily residential area with lots of impacts on homes and businesses. It's been many years but they are approaching a solution, with the portion going through the vernal pools being designed with series of raised areas to avoid the larger vernal pools, land dedication and oversize culverts to manage runoff.

There was also discussion of the South Sacramento Habitat Conservation Plan (SSHCP). Some projects will avoid mitigation by being part of the plan, but Ms. Begley noted that HCPs pose problems with NEPA because the federal government doesn't consider an HCP to be a whole solution. Mr. Webb noted the importance of developing creative solutions to address various regulatory issues, stakeholder and community concerns and project parameters. Ms. Begley also advised the group should be mindful of the worst case scenario impacts to "Waters of the United States," especially wetlands, because another lengthy and detailed process must be completed (NEPA 404).

#### **4) Environmental Constraints**

Peggy Lee of ICF Jones & Stokes led a group review and discussion of a resource map of the Sheldon/Wilton area. The map was compiled from a variety of information sources, including the Army Corps of Engineers, information collected by the County and information from the SSHCP. The discussion focused on water, flood plain and wildlife elements and the agencies involved in those areas. The Cosumnes River was a primary topic of discussion due to its habitat for anadromous fish (fish that live in saltwater but spawn in fresh water). The river also impacts on waterways within its watershed. The group also discussed the Cosumnes River area being a large Swainson's Hawk nesting area. The group agreed to look at the alignments they chose to evaluate the various sensitive environmental elements and determine if adjustments should be made.

There was discussion of whether there were plans to plan/design the Connector's roadway components in conjunction with a habitat conservation plan or if there were plans to preserve natural elements instead of mitigating for impacting them. Ms. Axiaq noted the Connector is interested in including restoration in the project and will evaluate all viable alternatives. The various resource agencies are focused on their area of interest, so balancing all those interests can be challenging to develop the "least environmentally damaging practicable alternative." She also noted that, depending on the agencies involved, additional studies and permits may be required.

Mr. Zlotkowski suggested a layered map be developed to help illuminate potential resource issues related to different Sheldon-area alignments. The layers would include species habitats, conservation areas, water, flood plains, footings of where a bypass may touch down and engineering lines showing proposed alignments. The group agreed it would be helpful.

The group discussed the unique environmental issues raised by a bypass alternative, compared to the environmental issues of a standard roadway. Mr. Webb and Ms. Axiag noted there are technologies and innovative solutions available to build a roadway with a set of habitat conservation measures, such as considering the types of material used, controlling runoff, and even installing barriers so no litter reaches the conservation area.

The group raised the issue of the levees in the area, and asked how they will be figured into the plans (not from the standpoint of the levees necessarily being impacted, but if a levee breaks). Ms. Begley noted that with the recent Plumas Lakes development, a second set of levees were built within the boundaries of the existing levees for added protection and the creation of a new riparian habitat.

Mr. Zlotkowski reminded the group that a discussion should take place about the differences between different elements of the proposed alignments, how viable alternatives are, and what the engineering and cost considerations are with each alignment. He recommended that additional expert information (engineering detail, costing, and projects with reference aspects) be gathered and assimilated into a mini “Cliffs Notes” version of an environmental document to help the group determine the functionality and usability of the proposed alignments. It would be developed for the meeting five weeks from tonight.

A group member raised the issue of moving Sheldon the town back to its historical boundaries. It would likely cost a lot but keep an alignment as it is proposed. Mr. Zlotkowski noted it was a good discussion point for the next meeting—doing some high level yes/no decision making and then discussing bypasses.

The group requested that each expert in attendance develop a bulleted list of items the group should keep in mind: things they can expect and items that could impact them. They also requested photographs of example projects in the “before, during and after” phases to illuminate impacts. The group would also like to do a tabletop exercise at a future meeting to evaluate the maps and alignments from an engineering perspective.

Experts noted a few terms the group could search for online for more perspective: “FHWA exemplary projects” or “LID projects” (low impact development).

## **5) Next Meeting**

The meeting wrapped up with discussion on the specific topics and materials for the next meeting: continue the traffic and land use discussion with John Long; discuss relocating Sheldon; include time for a report-back from the community. The next meeting will be held in three weeks, on July 15, from 5:00-7:30 p.m. at the Connector JPA office.

*\*This is an annotated version of the notes transcribed during the meeting. More detailed notes are available upon request.*