SCH # 2020040061

DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT

MORRISON CANYON ROAD TRAFFIC SAFETY PROJECT

Prepared for:

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Acronyms and Abbreviations

AB	Assembly Bill
ABAG	Association of Bay Area Governments
AC Transit	Alameda-Contra Costa County Transit
Alameda CTC	Alameda County Transportation Commission
BAAQMD	Bay Area Air Quality Management District
CAA	Clean Air Act
CAAQS	California Ambient Air Quality Standards
CAL FIRE	California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection
CARB	California Air Resources Board
CCAA	California Clean Air Act
CEC	California Energy Commission
CEQA	California Environmental Quality Act
CH_4	methane
City	City of Fremont
CMP	Congestion Management Program
CNDDB	California Natural Diversity Database
CNEL	community noise equivalent level
CNPS	California Native Plant Society
CO	carbon monoxide
CO_2	carbon dioxide
CO_2e	carbon dioxide equivalent
CPUC	California Public Utilities commission
dB	decibel
dBA	A-weighted decibel
DPM	diesel particulate matter
EBRPD	East Bay Regional Park District
ECOS	Environmental Conservation Online System
EIR	environmental impact report
EO	executive order
EPA	U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
FEMA	Federal Emergency Management Agency
Final 2017 Clean Air Plan	Spare the Air, Cool the Climate
FUSD	Fremont Unified School District
GHG	greenhouse gas
GWP	global warming potential
HCM	Highway Capacity Manual

Hot Spots Act	Air Toxics “Hot Spots” Information and Assessment Act of 1987
HOT	high-occupancy toll
I	Interstate
IPCC	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
LCFS	low carbon fuel standard
L_{dn}	day-night level
L_{eq} 1h	1-hour A-weighted equivalent sound level
L_{eq}	equivalent sound level
L_{max}	maximum sound level
LOS	level of service
LRA	Local Responsibility Area
MTC	Metropolitan Transportation Commission
MTS	Metropolitan Transportation System
MUTCD	Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices
N_2O	nitrous oxide
N/A	Not Applicable
NAAQS	National Ambient Air Quality Standards
NAHC	Native American Heritage Commission
NHTSA	National Highway Traffic Safety Administration
NO	nitric oxide
NO_2	nitrogen dioxide
NOP	notice of preparation
NO_X	oxides of nitrogen
NWI	National Wetlands Inventory
NWIC	Northwest Information Center
OPR	Office of Planning and Research
ppm	parts per million
ROGs	reactive organic gases
RPS	Renewables Portfolio Standard
RTP	regional transportation plan
SAFE	Safer Affordable Fuel Efficient
SB	Senate Bill
SCS	sustainable communities strategy
SFBAAB	San Francisco Bay Area Air Basin
SIP	State Implementation Plan
SO_2	sulfur dioxide
SOI	sphere of influence
SR	State Route
SRA	State Responsibility Area

SWIS	Solid Waste Information System
SWRCB	State Water Resources Control Board
TACs	toxic air contaminants
Tanner Act	Toxic Air Contaminant Identification and Control Act
USFWS	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
VMT	vehicle miles traveled
$\mu g/m^3$	micrograms per cubic meter

ES.1 Project Under Review

The City of Fremont (the City) proposes to permanently close an approximately 0.8-mile stretch of middle Morrison Canyon Road to private motor vehicles. Morrison Canyon Road, at its narrowest section, is a nine-foot-wide winding road in the City's Hill Area, with a steep embankment on one side. Bi-directional automobile traffic has markedly increased since 2016 along this route, as evening, weekday commuters have sought to avoid traffic along Interstate 680 and/or Mission Boulevard. This increase in traffic has contributed to a considerable increase in two-way vehicle conflicts. Additionally, because many pedestrians and cyclists use Morrison Canyon Road as a route to access Vargas Plateau Regional Park east of the intersection with Vargas Road, the increase in traffic also presents an elevated risks of vehicle conflicts between motor vehicles and pedestrians and cyclists.

The closure would be implemented through the installation of five to ten flexible plastic barricades with a hinged base. These barricades would be installed immediately east of the intersection of Morrison Canyon Road and Ridge Terrace and immediately west of the intersection of Morrison Canyon Road and Vargas Road. Pedestrians and cyclists would be able to bypass the barricades and utilize the closed roadway segment. Private motor vehicles and emergency responders would have continued vehicular access to the closed roadway segment during emergencies; most standard automobiles can drive over the flexible barricades, and would be permitted to do so in emergency scenarios. To support the roadway closure, the City would also install warning signage with solar-powered lights. All project components would be installed within the roadway or right-of-way.

ES.2 Areas of Controversy/Issues to Be Resolved

ES.2.1 Scoping Comments

The release of the NOP in October 2019[1] initiated the formal CEQA scoping process, the purpose of which is to allow the public and government agencies to comment on the issues and provide input on the scope of the EIR. Individuals and agencies that received these notices include local, regional, and state agencies; property owners and adjacent residents and tenants on Morrison Canyon Road and adjacent roadways; and other potentially interested parties that have requested such notice. During (and after) the public comment period, 46 letters were received regarding environmental concerns specific to the proposed project or the scope and contents of the EIR. Comments regarding environmental concerns were made in the following topic areas: general transportation and circulation, enforcement of the road closure, vehicle, bicycle, and pedestrian safety, illegal dumping, wildfire, emergency access, local resident access, accessibility to Vargas Plateau Regional Park, aesthetics, and general park and recreation issues. A summary of all NOP comments received and the location in the EIR where the relevant topic is addressed, is included in Table ES-1, Scoping

[1] The NOP was formally posted to the County Clerk on 4/3/2020, which initiated a formal review period from 4/3/2020 to 5/4/2020. No comments were received during this time period.

Comment Summary, below. Some comment topics do not fall within the topic areas or requirements of this CEQA analysis, and those comments are noted in the table as Not Applicable (N/A).

Table ES-1. Scoping Comments Summary

Commenter Name	Comment Summary	Where Comment Is Addressed in the EIR
Comments Postmarked or Received Before the NOP Comment Period Closure (Before November 2, 2019)		
Kathy Heinze	General support for proposed project	Not Applicable (N/A)
Jose Alvarellos	General support for proposed project and request that bicycling be promoted on Morrison Canyon Road to reduce bicycle traffic on Niles Canyon Road.	• See Section 3.6, Transportation and Circulation, for a discussion of current bicycling conditions on Morrison Canyon Road and in the City, and conditions anticipated with project implementation.
Craig Wood	Commenter expresses concerns regarding safety between cars, pedestrians, and cyclists under Morrison Canyon Road's current configuration, also noting that traffic noise has increased along Morrison Canyon Road as commute traffic along the roadway has increased. The commenter requests a more robust roadway closure solution than that considered under the proposed project conditions, including additional warning signage. The commenter states that traffic reductions along Morrison Canyon Road would reduce wildfire risk, and expresses concern regarding the dumping of construction materials along the road. The commenter re-emphasizes that the roadway is hazardous for vehicles, including trucks and construction vehicles.	• See Section 3.6, Transportation and Circulation, for a discussion of current vehicular traffic and bicycling conditions on Morrison Canyon Road and in the City, and conditions anticipated with project implementation. • As described in Chapter 2.0, Project Description, the proposed project would include warning signage prior to the roadway closure points. • See the Hazards and Hazardous Materials and Wildfire subsections of Section 3.7, Other Resources, for discussions on wildfire hazards in the project area.
Union Sanitary District	The proposed project is outside of Union Sanitary District's service area. Thus, the District has no facilities impacted by the road closure and no subsequent comments.	N/A
Pamela Lopez, Abel Vargas, John Vargas, and Michele Whitfield	The commenters express concerns regarding the health and safety of residents of Morrison Canyon Road and Vargas Road with project implementation. The commenters state that Morrison Canyon Road is their most direct route to public safety facilities including police, fire, and hospital services. The commenters request local access along Morrison Canyon Road for residents and continued road access in emergency scenarios, including events that would make Vargas Road impassable. The commenters	• See Chapter 2.0, Project Description, and Section 3.5, Public Services, for discussions regarding continued roadway access for emergency responders as well as for residents in the event of an emergency.

Commenter Name	Comment Summary	Where Comment Is Addressed in the EIR
	request that emergency response vehicles maintain continued access to Morrison Canyon Road.	
Jay Underwood	General support for the proposed project and request that design plans incorporate a "penalty sign" or phone number to report vehicles who drive over barricades.	• As described in Chapter 2.0, Project Description, the proposed project would include warning signage prior to the roadway closure points.
Assis Hou	General support for the proposed project and comments regarding the need to improve roadway safety for pedestrians and cyclists.	• See Section 2.4, Project Objectives, for a list of objectives including improving safety conditions along Morrison Canyon Road. • See Section 3.6, Transportation and Circulation, for a discussion of current bicycling conditions on Morrison Canyon Road and in the City, as well as conditions anticipated with project implementation.
Larry Plaza	General support for the proposed project	N/A
Monika Lee	General support for the proposed project; commenter expresses concern regarding hazardous conditions for vehicles on Morrison Canyon Road.	• See Section 3.6, Transportation and Circulation, for a discussion of current vehicular traffic and bicycling conditions on Morrison Canyon Road and in the City, as well as conditions anticipated with project implementation.
Jannet Benz	The commenter expresses general concern for the proposed project, as well as concerns that the proposed project would decrease accessibility and subsequent use of Vargas Plateau Regional Park for residents west of the canyon area. The commenter requests that the EIR Transportation/Traffic analysis consider potential impacts on park access for residents west of the canyon. The commenter states that vehicular roadway use presents hazards to pedestrians and cyclists, and gives suggestions to improve non-vehicular connectivity to the park. Additionally, the commenter expresses concern regarding parking at Vargas Plateau Regional Park, possible spill-over effects on local street parking from patrons wishing to park at the base of Morrison Canyon Road and walk to the Park, and VMT effects.	• See the Recreation subsection of Section 3.7, Other Resources, for a discussion of access to Vargas Plateau Regional Park. • See Section 3.6, Transportation and Circulation, for a discussion of current bicycling conditions on Morrison Canyon Road and in the City, as well as conditions anticipated with project implementation.
Bike Fremont	General support for the proposed project	N/A

Commenter Name	Comment Summary	Where Comment Is Addressed in the EIR
Tim Wu	General support for the proposed project	N/A
James Rardin	General support for the proposed project	N/A
Harvey Wong	General support for the proposed project	N/A
Dennis Addison	General support for the proposed project	N/A
Cindy Potter	General support for the proposed project	N/A
Lori Sommer	General support for the proposed project	N/A
Myvan Quoc	General support for the proposed project	N/A
Heidi Lach	General support for the proposed project	N/A
Pamela Weiss Barr	The commenter expresses concerns regarding current roadway safety conditions. The commenter states that only emergency vehicles should maintain roadway access, and notes illegal dumping within the canyon. The commenter also states that the pilot program barricades and associated signage have been vandalized. Additionally, the commenter expresses concern that the project does not offer a permanent enough solution, stating that drivers will continue to use the closed roadway.	• See Chapter 2.0, Project Description regarding the proposed road closure signage and closure mechanisms. • See Section 3.5, Public Services, regarding continued roadway access for emergency responders as well as for residents in the event of an emergency.
Eric Barr	General support for the proposed project, as well as concerns regarding littering along the roadway.	N/A
Aanh2	General support for the proposed project, but notes that bicyclists can present a safety hazard on Morrison Canyon Road.	• Issues pertaining to bicycle safety are addressed in Section 3.6, Transportation and Circulation.
Vanessa McDonnell	General support for the proposed project.	N/A
Nick Gould	General support for the proposed project, and concerns that Vargas Plateau Regional Park as a destination could increase vehicular traffic along Morrison Canyon Road if the closure is not implemented.	• See the Recreation subsection of Section 3.7, Other Resources, regarding access to Vargas Plateau Regional Park.
Himanshu Chokshi and Tejal Chokshi	General support for the proposed project	N/A
Sierra Club: Southern Alameda County Group	General support for the proposed project, and a request that the scope of the EIR include considerations of park access to visitors originating on the western side of the canyon. The commenter encourages the City to consider park access in the EIR Transportation/Traffic analysis, including park access via public transportation and hiking trails.	• See the Recreation subsection of Section 3.7, Other Resources, regarding access to Vargas Plateau Regional Park.
Hartmut Wiesenthal	General support for the proposed project	N/A
Dirk deJong	The commenter notes that vehicle hazards on Morrison Canyon Road has degraded with the	• See Section 3.5, Public Services, regarding roadway

Commenter Name	Comment Summary	Where Comment Is Addressed in the EIR
	increased use of phone navigation applications and expresses general support for the proposed project due to associated safety concerns. The commenter states that emergency vehicle access must be maintained due to the high density of unmaintained trees along the roadway, which elevate wildfire risk. Additionally, the commenter suggests installing a high-resolution traffic camera to capture personal roadway vehicle use transgressors.	access for emergency responders, as well as for residents in the event of an emergency. • As described in Chapter 2.0, Project Description, the proposed project would include warning signage prior to the roadway closure points.
Doug Burgess	General support for the proposed project	N/A
Tina Marquez	The commenter expresses concern about loss of open space in the City due to high density housing developments, which has increased vehicular traffic on Morrison Canyon Road, which is used as a Mission Boulevard/Interstate-680 cut-through route. The commenter states that closing Morrison Canyon Road to through-traffic is necessary to assure safety of residents, prevent wildfires, and to protect local open space aesthetic resources in the Hill Area. Additionally, the commenter expressed a desire that the proposed project consider the addition of speed bumps to slow down drivers that attempt to "beat the light" at Mission Boulevard and Morrison Canyon Road.	• See Section 3.6, Transportation and Circulation, regarding current traffic conditions. In addition, see the Aesthetics and Wildfire subsections of Section 3.7, Other Resources. • See Chapter 2.0, Project Description, regarding project design. Chapter 4.0, Alternatives, includes a project alternative that would utilize speed tables.
Monica Melville, Navin Melville, Dominic Melville, Jo Melville, and 60 additional signatures	General support for the proposed project and support for establishing a recreational resource in the form of a Class I Trail without the need to spend additional funds doing so.	N/A
Kirti Doshi	General support for the proposed project and a request to expand the closure to all portions of Morrison Canyon Road beyond Canyon Heights Drive.	N/A
Serena Fu	General support for the proposed project, and concerns that vehicle traffic has damaged the road, which could lead to landslides.	N/A • Refer to the Geology and Soils subsection of Section 3.7, Other Resources.
Sheetal Chokshi	General support for the proposed project	N/A
Demitri Morgan	General support for the proposed project, citing specific safety concerns, and a request for additional signage clarifying that posted speed limits apply to bicyclists on the roadway. The commenter also states that the proposed plastic barricades are insufficient, as they have been damaged by vehicles driving over them; the commenter therefore suggests either periodic replacement of the barricades or improved	• As described in Chapter 2.0, Project Description, the proposed project would include warning signage prior to the roadway closure points. • See Chapter 4.0, Alternatives, which describes an

Commenter Name	Comment Summary	Where Comment Is Addressed in the EIR
	enforcement of the roadway closure, perhaps through closure design refinements. The commenter suggests a potential alternative to include roadway improvements that make Morrison Canyon Road safer for motor vehicle traffic.	alternative that was considered but dismissed that would improve the roadway to current standards.
Michael Chew	General support for the proposed project	N/A
Jeanne	General support for the proposed project	N/A
jlkeenandesigns	General support for the proposed project	N/A
Junying Zhang	General support for the proposed project	N/A
Comments Postmarked or Received After the NOP Comment Period Closure (After November 2, 2019)		
Elaine Owyang	General support for the proposed project	N/A
Carolyn Drybrae	General support for the proposed project, or expand to also close the portion of Morrison Canyon Road above its intersection with Vargas Road.	N/A
Richard Godfrey	General support for the proposed project, with a request that the City consider maintaining access for the two property owners who live on the road through design refinements such as a locked gate at the base of the road.	• See Chapter 4.0, Alternatives, for a discussion of project alternatives, including an alternative that was dismissed from further consideration that would allow emergency and hillside residential access only.
Nicholas Bardales	General support for the proposed project and a request that project design incorporate speed bumps on the corner turn towards Morrison Canyon Road and permanent road blocks before the turn.	• See Chapter 4.0, Alternatives, for a discussion of alternatives to the proposed project. Alternative 3 involves a program of measures intended to discourage commuter use of Morrison Canyon Road that would utilize speed tables, among other strategies. • See Chapter 2.0, Project Description, for a description of the project design.
William Yragui, Mission Peak Conservancy	General support for the proposed project, citing concerns identified in a 2008 lawsuit against East Bay Regional Parks District regarding roadway safety conditions with the dedication of Vargas Plateau Regional Park. The commenter requested that the city dedicate the closed roadway as a recreational trail.	• See the Recreation subsection of Section 3.7, Other Resources, for a discussion regarding access to Vargas Plateau Regional Park.
Paul Perkins	General support for the proposed project	N/A
Jack Balch	The commenter notes that while Morrison Canyon Road is closed to personal vehicle through-traffic, some residents (two ranchers) still use the roadway when needed. Additionally, residents used the roadway when there was a major accident on I-680.	• See Chapter 2.0, Project Description, for a description of the project's proposed signage. • See Chapter 2.0, Project

Commenter Name	Comment Summary	Where Comment Is Addressed in the EIR
	Additionally, the commenter has had to use Morrison Canyon Road to access their home on Vargas Road when Vargas Road was impassable due to fallen trees and power lines, car accidents, and heavy rain, noting that local residents themselves (rather than the City) have made recent repairs to Vargas Road. Vargas Plateau Regional Park has increased non-local traffic along Vargas Road, which elevates the potential for accidents. The commenter states that the proposed lower closure site is unsafe, and that many drivers cannot safely turn around at this location. Additionally, there is a driveway at the proposed closure spot which is sometimes mistaken as a continuation of the road, but actually leads to private residences. These residents have begun leaving their private gate unlocked, as their driveway offers the only feasible location for lost drivers to turn around. However, one of the residents was recently a victim of burglary for this reason. The commenter asserts that travel times will increase significantly if coming from Fremont, and that their own commute from Hayward will rise from 20-25 minutes to over an hour at peak times. A neighbor quit school due to an inability to return home at a reasonable hour. Additionally, the commenter expresses concerns regarding bicycle-vehicle interactions, as well as concerns that residents and emergency responders do not know that they can bypass the barricades/barricades in the event of an emergency. The barricades can scratch the front bumper in most cars, resulting in damage. The commenter cites that increased traffic may serve as a deterrent to illegal dumping activities. The commenter believes that his quality of life will be degraded with implementation of the project.	Description, and Section 3.5, Public Services, regarding roadway access for emergency responders as well as for residents in the event of an emergency. • Refer to Section 3.6, Transportation and Circulation, regarding traffic impacts.

ES.2.2 Non-CEQA Issues Raised in the Scoping Process

A number of comments received in response to the NOP are related to topics that do not pertain to CEQA. CEQA requires a lead agency to consider direct physical changes which may be caused by and are immediately related to the project and indirect physical changes which are reasonably foreseeable consequences of the project. As such, an EIR should inform governmental decision makers and the public about the potential significant environmental effects of proposed activities (Section 15002). Comments that are matters of opinion and comments related to topics such as basic quality of life, personal inconvenience, and residential safety are very important and valuable for consideration by City decision-makers in deciding to approve or disapprove the proposed project. However, those topics are not related to CEQA and do not require analysis under CEQA. As such, the comments raised during the scoping process that do not pertain to CEQA are not addressed in this EIR.

ES.2.3 Community Outreach Process

The following is a summary of the community outreach process the City has conducted for the proposed project, beginning in the spring of 2018:

- In April 2018, a notification was sent to residents living in proximity of Morrison Canyon Road asking for participation in an on-line survey soliciting feedback on the proposed traffic safety project alternatives for Morrison Canyon Road.
- On May 30, 2018, a community meeting was held to review the traffic safety issues on Morrison Canyon Road, traffic data that had been collected, and to summarize the community feedback on the alternatives under consideration.
- On June 19, 2018, the City Council reviewed the alternatives along with community feedback, and provided direction to pursue closing the "middle" section of Morrison Canyon Road in the interest of public safety.
- On October 16, 2018, the City Council approved a temporary one-year closure of Morrison Canyon Road and authorized the City Manager and City Attorney to pursue state legislation providing the City with special authority to operate Morrison Canyon Road.
- On May 1, 2019, a community meeting was held to share perspectives on the effects of the temporary closure (pros and cons) and to provide an update on the status of state legislation regarding Morrison Canyon Road operations.

ES.3 Significant Environmental Impacts

The proposed project would result in one significant and unavoidable environmental impact where no mitigation measures are available to reduce the impact:

- **Land Use: Impact LU-1**. The proposed project would physically divide an established community.

Through compliance with all local, state, and federal ordinances and regulatory requirements, potential impacts under all other resource areas would be less than significant. This project has no mitigation measures.

ES.4 Alternatives to the Project

Alternative 1: No-Project Alternative

Alternative 1 assumes that the temporary closure installed in November 2018 would be removed and use of Morrison Canyon Road prior to the temporary closure would resume.

Alternative 2: Conversion of Morrison Canyon Road to One-Way, Eastbound Traffic with Traffic Calming Measures Alternative

Alternative 2 would convert middle Morrison Canyon Road (between Ridge Terrace and Vargas Road) to a one-way eastbound (i.e. uphill) road and would include traffic calming treatments such as speed tables, speed bumps, or other similar measures.

Alternative 3: Discourage Commuter Use of Morrison Canyon Road Alternative

Alternative 3 would implement a program of measures intended to discourage commuter use of Morrison Canyon Road with installations such as signage, stop signs, speed tables, posted speed reduction, and increased enforcement.

ES.5 Environmentally Superior Alternative

The identification of the Environmentally Superior Alternative results from a comparison of the impacts associated with the proposed project and each alternative, as summarized above. In comparing the project and the three feasible project alternatives, the proposed project is considered environmentally superior. While it would result in a *conservatively designated* significant and unavoidable impact related to community division (LU-1) (like Alternative 2 and Alternative 3) it would do so while avoiding new effects such as those that would be expected under Alternative 2 and Alternative 3 related to ground disturbance and construction activities. Therefore, the proposed project is considered the environmentally superior alternative.

ES.6 Summary of Environmental Impacts

Table ES-2 describes the significance determination of all potential project-related impacts analyzed in this draft EIR.

Table ES-2. Summary of Project Impacts

EIR CHAPTERS	
Impact	**Significance Determination**
Air Quality	
Impact AQ-1: The proposed project would not conflict with or obstruct implementation of the applicable air quality plan during construction and routine operations.	Less than significant
Impact AQ-2: The proposed project would not result in a cumulatively considerable net increase in any criteria pollutant for which the project region is a nonattainment area for an applicable federal or state ambient air quality standard.	Less than significant
Impact AQ-3: The proposed project would not expose sensitive receptors to substantial pollutant concentrations.	Less than significant
Impact AQ-4: The proposed project would not result in other emissions (such as those leading to odors) adversely affecting a substantial number of people.	Less than significant
Noise and Vibration	
Impact NOI-1: The project would not result in generation of a substantial temporary or permanent increase in ambient noise levels in the vicinity of the project in excess of standards established in the local general plan or noise ordinance, or applicable standards of other agencies.	Less than significant
Impact NOI-2. The project would not result in generation of excessive ground-borne vibration or ground-borne noise levels.	Less than significant

EIR CHAPTERS	
Impact	**Significance Determination**
Impact NOI-3: The project would not be located within the vicinity of a private airstrip or an airport land use plan or within two miles of a public airport or public use airport, and therefore would not expose people residing or working in the project area to excessive noise levels.	No impact
Greenhouse Gases	
Impact GHG-1: The proposed project would not generate greenhouse gas emissions, either directly or indirectly, that may have a significant impact on the environment.	Less than significant
Impact GHG-2: The proposed project would not conflict with an applicable plan, policy, or regulation adopted for the purpose of reducing the emissions of greenhouse gases.	Less than significant
Land Use and Planning	
Impact LU-1. The proposed project would physically divide an established community.	*Conservatively designated* significant and unavoidable
Impact LU-2. The proposed project would not cause a significant environmental impact due to a conflict with any land use plan, policy, or regulation adopted for the purpose of avoiding or mitigating an environmental effect.	No impact
Public Services	
Impact PS-1: The proposed project would not result in substantial adverse physical impacts associated with the provision of new or physically altered governmental facilities or a 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 fire and police protection	Less than significant
Transportation and Circulation	
Impact TR-1: The proposed project would redistribute traffic volumes on the area roadway network, but would not exceed the capacity of the existing circulation system, based on the applicable measures of effectiveness.	Less than significant
Impact TR-2: The project, combined with 2040 cumulative conditions, including contributions from past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future development, would not result in further exceedance of the already-unacceptable capacity of the existing circulation system, based on the applicable measures of effectiveness.	Less than significant
Impact TR-3: The project would not substantially increase hazards due to a design feature or incompatible uses.	Less than significant
Impact TR-4: The project would not result in inadequate emergency access.	Less than significant
Impact TR-5: The project would not conflict with adopted policies, plans, or programs regarding public transit, bicycle, or pedestrian facilities, or otherwise decrease the performance or safety of such facilities.	Less than significant
OTHER RESOURCES	
Aesthetics	
Impact AES-a: The project would not have an adverse effect on a scenic vista.	Less than significant
Impact AES-b: The project would not substantially damage scenic resources, including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings along a scenic highway.	No impact

EIR CHAPTERS	
Impact	**Significance Determination**
Impact AES-c: The project would not substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of public views of the site and its surroundings? (Public views are those that are experienced from publicly accessible vantage point). If the project is in an urbanized area, would the project conflict with applicable zoning and other regulations governing scenic quality.	Less than significant
Impact AES-d: The project would not create a new source of substantial light or glare that would adversely affect daytime or nighttime views in the area.	Less than significant
Agriculture and Forestry Resources	
Impact AG-a: The project would not convert Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of 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.	No impact
Impact AG-b: The project would not conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use or conflict with a Williamson Act contract	No impact
Impact AG-c: The project would not conflict with existing zoning for, or cause rezoning of forest land (as defined in Public Resources Code Section 12220(g)), timberland (as defined by Public Resources Code Section 4526), or timberland zoned Timberland Production (as defined by Government Code Section 51104(g))	No impact
Impact AG-d: The project would not result in the loss of forest land or conversion of forest land to non-forest use.	No impact
Impact AG-e: The project would not involve other changes in the existing environment that, due to their location or nature, could result in conversion of Farmland to non-agricultural use or conversion of forest land to non-forest use.	No impact
Biological Resources	
Impact BIO-a: The project would not 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 Wildlife or U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.	Less than significant
Impact BIO-b: The project would not 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 Wildlife or U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.	Less than significant
Impact BIO-c: The project would not have a substantial adverse effect on state or federally protected wetlands (including, but not limited to, marshes, vernal pools, coastal wetlands, etc.) through direct removal, filling, hydrological interruption, or other means.	Less than significant
Impact BIO-d: The project would not interfere substantially with the movement of any native resident or migratory fish or wildlife species or with established native resident or migratory wildlife corridors, or impede the use of native wildlife nursery sites	Less than significant
Impact BIO-e: The project would not conflict with any local policies or ordinances protecting biological resources, such as a tree preservation policy or ordinance.	Less than significant
Impact BIO-f: The project would not conflict with the provisions of an adopted habitat conservation plan, natural community conservation plan, or other approved local, regional, or state habitat conservation plan.	No impact

EIR CHAPTERS	
Impact	**Significance Determination**
Cultural Resources	
Impact CUL-a: The project would not result in potentially significant environmental impact due to wasteful, inefficient, or unnecessary consumption of energy resources, during project construction or operation.	No impact
Impact CUL-b: The project would not cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of an archaeological resource pursuant to Section 15064.5.	No impact
Impact CUL-c: The project would not disturb any human remains, including those interred outside of dedicated cemeteries.	Less than significant
Energy	
Impact EN-a: The project would not result in potentially significant environmental impact due to wasteful, inefficient, or unnecessary consumption of energy resources, during project construction or operation.	Less than significant
Impact EN-b: The project would not conflict with or obstruct a state or local plan for renewable energy or energy efficiency.	Less than Significant
Geology and Soils	
Impact GEO-a. The project would not directly or indirectly cause potential substantial adverse effects, including the risk of loss, injury, or death involving: • Rupture of a known earthquake fault, as delineated on 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 according to Division of Mines and Geology Special Publication 42; • Strong seismic ground shaking; • Seismic-related ground failure, including liquefaction; or • Landslides.	No impact
Impact GEO-b: The project would not result in substantial soil erosion or the loss of topsoil	No impact
Impact GEO-c: The project would not be located on a geologic unit or soil that is unstable or that would become unstable as a result of the project and potentially result in an onsite or offsite landslide, lateral spreading, subsidence, liquefaction, or collapse.	No impact
Impact GEO-d: The project would not be located on expansive soil, as defined in Table 18-1-B of the Uniform Building Code (1994), creating substantial direct or indirect risks to life or property.	No impact
Impact GEO-e: The project would not cause any impacts pertaining to being located on soils incapable of adequately supporting the use of septic tanks or alternative wastewater disposal systems in areas where sewers are not available for the disposal of wastewater	No impact
Impact GEO-f: The project would not directly or indirectly destroy a unique paleontological resource or site or unique geologic feature.	No impact
Hazards and Hazardous Materials	
Impact HAZ-a: The project would not create a significant hazard to the public or the environment through the routine transport, use, or disposal of hazardous materials.	No impact
Impact HAZ-b: The project would not 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.	No impact

EIR CHAPTERS	
Impact	**Significance Determination**
Impact HAZ-c: The project would not emit hazardous emissions or involve handling hazardous or acutely hazardous materials, substances, or waste within one-quarter mile of an existing or proposed school.	No impact
Impact HAZ-d: The project would not be located on a site that 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.	No impact
Impact HAZ-e: The project would not be located within an airport land use plan area or, where such a plan has not been adopted, be within two miles of a public airport or public use airport, and result in a safety hazard or excessive noise for people residing or working in the project area.	No impact
Impact HAZ-f: The project would not impair implementation of or physically interfere with an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan.	Less than significant
Impact HAZ-g: The project would not expose people or structures, either directly or indirectly, to a significant risk of loss, injury, or death involving wildland fires.	Less than significant
Hydrology and Water Quality	
Impact HYD-a: The project would not violate any water quality standards or waste discharge requirements or otherwise substantially degrade surface or groundwater quality	Less than significant
Impact HYD-b: The project would not substantially decrease groundwater supplies or interfere substantially with groundwater recharge such that the project may impede sustainable groundwater management of the basin.	No impact
Impact-HYD-c: The project would not substantially alter the existing drainage pattern of the site or area, including through the alteration of the course of a stream or river or through the addition of impervious surfaces, in a manner that would: • Result in substantial erosion or siltation on or off site; • Substantially increase the rate or amount of surface runoff in a manner that would result in flooding on or offsite; • Create or contribute runoff water that would exceed the capacity of existing or planned stormwater drainage systems or provide substantial additional sources of polluted runoff; or • Impede or redirect flood flows.	No impact
Impact-HYD-d: The project would not risk release of pollutants during an inundation event due to being located in a flood hazard, tsunami, or seiche zone.	No impact
Impact-HYD-e: The project would not conflict with or obstruct implementation of a water quality control plan or sustainable groundwater management plan.	No impact
Mineral Resources	
Impact MIN-a: The project would not 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.	No impact
Impact MIN-b: The project would not 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.	No impact
Population and Housing	

EIR CHAPTERS	
Impact	**Significance Determination**
Impact POP-a: The project would not induce substantial unplanned population growth in an area, either directly (e.g., by proposing new homes and businesses) or indirectly (e.g., through extension of roads or other infrastructure).	No impact
Impact POP-b: The project would not displace a substantial number of existing people or housing, necessitating the construction of replacement housing elsewhere.	No impact
Public Services	
Impact PS-a. The project would not result in substantial adverse physical impacts associated with the provision of new or physically altered governmental facilities or a 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 following public services: • Schools; • Parks; or • Other public facilities.	No Impact
Recreation	
Impact REC-a: The project would not 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.	Less than significant
Impact REC-b: The project would not include recreational facilities or require the construction or expansion of recreational facilities that might have an adverse physical effect on the environment.	Less than significant
Tribal Cultural Resources	
Impact TCR-a: The project would not cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a tribal cultural resource that is listed or eligible for listing in the California Register of Historical Resources, or in a local register of historical resources as defined in Public Resources Code section 5020.1(k).	Less than significant
Impact TCR-b: The project would not cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a tribal cultural resource that is determined by the lead agency, in its discretion and supported by substantial evidence, to be significant pursuant to criteria set forth in subdivision (c) of Public Resources Code Section 5024.1. In applying the criteria set forth in subdivision (c) of Public Resource Code Section 5024.1, the lead agency shall consider the significance of the resource to a California Native American tribe.	Less than significant
Utilities and Service Systems	
Impact UTIL-a: The project would not or result in the relocation or construction of new or expanded water, wastewater treatment, stormwater drainage, electric power, natural gas, or telecommunications facilities, the construction or relocation of which could cause significant environmental effects.	No impact
Impact UTIL-b: The project would not interfere with water supplies available to serve the project and reasonably foreseeable future development during normal, dry, and multiple dry years.	No impact
Impact UTIL-c: The project would not result in a determination by the wastewater treatment provider that 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.	No impact

EIR CHAPTERS	
Impact	**Significance Determination**
Impact UTIL-d: The project would not generate solid waste in excess of state or local standards, or in excess of the capacity of local infrastructure, or otherwise impair the attainment of solid waste reduction goals.	No impact
Impact UTIL-e: The project would comply with federal, state, and local management and reduction statutes and regulations related to solid waste.	No impact
Wildfire	
Impact-WF-a: The project would not impair an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan.	Less than significant
Impact WF-b: The project would not, due to slope, prevailing winds, and other factors, exacerbate wildfire risks of, and thereby expose project occupants to, pollutant concentrations from a wildfire or the uncontrolled spread of a wildfire.	No impact
Impact WF-c: The project would not require the installation or maintenance of associated infrastructure (such as roads, fuel breaks, emergency water sources, power lines, or other utilities) that may exacerbate fire risk or that may result in temporary or ongoing impacts on the environment.	No Impact
Impact WF-d: The project would not expose people or structures to significant risks, including downslope or downstream flooding or landslides, as a result of runoff, post-fire slope instability, or drainage changes.	No impact

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Chapter 1
Introduction

1.1 Introduction

The City of Fremont (City) proposes to permanently close an approximately 0.8-mile stretch of middle Morrison Canyon Road to private motor vehicles. The affected area currently is subject to a temporary road closure, which has been in place since November 2018. This draft environmental impact report (EIR) provides an assessment of the potential for physical environmental effects to result from the proposed permanent road closure.

Morrison Canyon Road is a narrow one-lane, bi-directional roadway located in the northeastern portion of the City that connects Mission Boulevard to Interstate 680 (I-680) via Vargas Road. Morrison Canyon Road touches several City neighborhoods, originating in the topographically flat Cherry/Guardino neighborhood and traversing between the Canyon Heights/Vallejo Mills and Kimber Gomes neighborhoods through an area of increasing rugged topography where it intersects with Vargas Road.

Historically, Morrison Canyon Road was a dirt/gravel trail providing limited access to upper Ridge Terrace and the rural hillside properties north of the intersection with Vargas Road. In the project area, Morrison Canyon Road is approximately 9 feet wide, at its narrowest point, and winds through areas with steep and often unstable hillside slopes that drop several hundred feet to Morrison Creek. Some sections include an asphalt berm to separate the road from a steep embankment.

In recent years, Morrison Canyon Road has been successively paved and has received chip seal maintenance treatments over the years, as necessary. The road continues to receive regular maintenance attention due to hillside/roadway sloughing. Because the narrowest parts of the roadway are along steep hillsides and heavily vegetated areas, City maintenance efforts have also included clearance of landslides, brush, and trees obstructing the roadway.

Prior to the 2018 temporary closure of Morrison Canyon Road, the City observed sharp increases in automobile traffic on Morrison Canyon Road since 2016. City traffic counts indicated a substantial number of evening weekday commuters were using Morrison Canyon Road as a means to reach I-680 Northbound via Vargas Road. This increase in the number of automobile trips on a roadway that lacks the capacity and width necessary to accommodate it has contributed to a considerable increase in two-way vehicle conflicts. Many sections lack the required width for two cars to pass by each other, often requiring one vehicle to reverse to make space, a potentially challenging traffic maneuver. Given the topography and curvature of the roadway, this has been a significant safety concern for drivers, pedestrians, and bicyclists.

The City believes the relatively recent phenomenon of highly increased usage of Morrison Canyon Road prior to its temporary closure was attributable in large part to the more widespread use of global positioning system (GPS)-enabled wayfinding applications, such as Waze, Google Maps, and the like. The algorithms of such applications, in some instances, would show Morrison Canyon Road as a "quicker" route between central Fremont and I-680, without taking into account the narrowness and other constraints of the roadway. As a result, although Morrison Canyon Road was initially a dirt road/trail providing very limited access to hillside areas, the period between 2016 until its 2018

temporary closure saw it being used in a manner inconsistent with its physical constraints and historic use. The data collected by the City indicate that approximately 80 percent of the total weekday vehicle traffic volume on Morrison Canyon Road is from eastbound (or uphill) vehicles traveling between 3:00 p.m. and 7:00 p.m.[1]

In the spring of 2018, the City initiated a community outreach process to solicit feedback on project alternatives to improve the safety of Morrison Canyon Road. Following a review of the alternatives and community feedback, as well as a City Council recommendation to pursue closing the middle section of Morrison Canyon Road in the interest of public safety, the City approved a temporary closure of Morrison Canyon Road on October 16, 2018; the closure became effective on November 17, 2018. The temporary closure, which includes barricades and signage, indicating the roadway access restrictions, limits access to private motor vehicles but also allows continued access for emergency vehicles, emergency access for local residents within the rural hillside area, and non-vehicular uses (pedestrian and bicycle). The temporary closure is achieved through the use of flexible plastic barricades with a hinged base that can be mounted by most motor vehicles and navigated by pedestrians and bicyclists.

1.2 Purpose of the Draft EIR

This draft EIR is intended to evaluate the environmental consequences that could occur if the project is approved and middle Morrison Canyon Road is permanently closed to private motor vehicles. As the lead agency for environmental review of this project, the City has prepared this draft EIR in compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).[2]

Consistent with CEQA, this draft EIR:

- Discloses the significant environmental impacts of the project
- Identifies mitigation measures that avoid or minimize these effects
- Identifies where significant impacts cannot be mitigated to a less-than-significant level
- Discusses any growth-inducing impacts associated with project approval
- Describes any effects found not to be significant
- Identifies feasible alternatives to the project that meet most project objectives while avoiding or reducing any identified impacts
- Describes cumulative impacts of the project (i.e., effects that may not be significant for the project alone but may be significant when considered in combination with past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future projects)

This draft EIR is an informational document. It is intended to provide public disclosure of the potentially significant environmental consequences of a project and to recommend mitigation measures and project alternatives to substantially lessen or avoid significant impacts. It is not the purpose of an EIR to recommend approval or denial of a project or otherwise comment on the

[1] City of Fremont. 2019. *Transportation Engineering, Major Projects, Morrison Canyon Road Traffic Safety Project*. Available: https://fremont.gov/3115/Morrison-Canyon-Road-Traffic-Safety-Proj. Accessed: October 3, 2019.

[2] Regulations for CEQA are set forth in California laws known as the CEQA Statutes (California Public Resources Code Section 21000 et seq.) and the State CEQA Guidelines (California Code of Regulations, Title 14, Division 6, Chapter 3, Section 15000 et seq.), as amended.

merits of a project. However, prior to taking an action to approve, conditionally approve, or deny the project, the lead agency (in this case, the City) must first certify that the EIR as adequate in its characterization of the project's potential environmental effects.

1.3 Environmental Review Procedure

Typically, a lead agency will commence the CEQA process by preparing an initial study, using the checklist of environmental topic areas provided in Appendix G of the State CEQA Guidelines. Following completion of the initial study, the lead agency will take one of the following actions:

- If the project is found to have no significant environmental effects, the lead agency can subsequently adopt a negative declaration.
- If the lead agency finds that the project has some significant environmental effects but the effects can be feasibly mitigated to a less-than-significant level, the lead agency can then adopt a mitigated negative declaration.
- If the lead agency finds that the project has significant environmental effects that cannot be feasibly mitigated to a less-than-significant level, CEQA compels the lead agency to prepare an EIR.

CEQA also gives lead agencies the discretion to omit preparation of an initial study and move directly to preparing an EIR. This course of action is advisable if there is a reasonable basis to conclude that the project will have significant environmental effects (State CEQA Guidelines Section 15060[d]).

Permanent closure of middle Morrison Canyon Road is considered to be a significant environmental effect as it pertains to land use because of the division of an established community, resulting from the installation of barricades. On that basis, the City has opted to move directly to preparation of this EIR.

As noted in CEQA Guidelines Section 15146, the degree of specificity in an EIR will correspond to the degree of specificity in the underlying activity. Based on the specificity of the project plans (see Chapter 2.0, Project Description), this EIR provides a project-level analysis of the proposed action. The level of analysis contained in this EIR will be adequate for proceeding with project implementation without further environmental review.

1.4 Scope of This Draft EIR

This EIR evaluates each of the environmental topics identified in Appendix G of the CEQA Guidelines (Title 14, Chapter 3, California Code of Regulations, Sections 15000–15387).

The scope of the draft EIR was informed by comments submitted in response to transmittal of a notice of preparation (NOP) on October 4, 2019. Appendix A includes copies of materials related to the NOP.[3] Following circulation of the NOP, the City received a total of 46 written comment letters regarding the

[3] In October 2019, the City transmitted the NOP to state and local agencies, neighbors, and interested parties. The transmittal yielded 41 comments from individuals or groups of individuals, one sanitary district, and three organizations. All of this correspondence is included in Appendix A.

scope and content of the draft EIR. These comments were taken into consideration in preparation of the draft EIR. A summary of comments received during the scoping period is provided in the Executive Summary. A copy of each letter submitted in response to the NOP is appended as Appendix A to this EIR.

1.5 Report Organization

This document is organized into the following chapters:

Executive Summary provides a summary of potential environmental impacts related to implementation of the project; it also describes the project alternatives. The Executive Summary provides a summary table that identifies the significant impacts, mitigation measures, and the level of significance of an impact before and after a mitigation measure is incorporated.

Chapter 1, Introduction, provides an introduction and overview of the purpose of this draft EIR and describes the environmental review process.

Chapter 2, Project Description, describes the project, including the project setting and project characteristics.

Chapter 3, Environmental Impact Analysis, describes the environmental setting, applicable plans and policies, the environmental impacts of the project, and mitigation measures to reduce the significance of the impacts. For this project, the City concluded that the project would not result in significant environmental effects for all but six of the environmental topic areas in Appendix G of the State CEQA Guidelines. Accordingly, the six topic areas (air quality, noise, greenhouse gases, land use and planning, public services, and transportation and circulation) are addressed in separate sections. All other environmental topic areas (for which no significant environmental effects were identified) are addressed in summary fashion within Section 3.7, *Other Resources*. The discussions in Section 3.7 have a level of detail similar to that in an initial study.

Chapter 4, Alternatives, considers alternatives to the project and compares the impacts of the alternatives to the project.

Chapter 5, CEQA-Required Assessment Conclusions, provides a summary discussion of project-related effects, including effects found not to be significant, unavoidable significant effects, and cumulative effects, and a discussion of the project's potential to induce growth in the area.

Chapter 6, Report Preparation, identifies all parties involved in the preparation of this EIR.

Appendices includes the NOP, copies of comments received on the NOP, and technical reports prepared by environmental and technical specialists for the evaluation of the project.

1.6 Environmental Review Process

Comments on the draft EIR must be submitted in writing, by email, or letter (email preferred), and can be submitted until **June 22, 2020** at the following address:

City of Fremont, Planning Division
ATTN: Bill Roth, Senior Planner

39550 Liberty Street, P.O. Box 5006
Fremont, CA 94537
Email: broth@fremont.gov

Reviewers are encouraged to focus on the document's adequacy in identifying and analyzing effects on the environment and the ways in which any significant effects might be avoided or mitigated.

Following the close of the public comment period, responses will be prepared and published as a separate document. The draft EIR text and appendices, together with the responses-to-comments document, will constitute the final EIR.

1.7 City Decision-Making

Following publication of the final EIR, the City Council will hold a public hearing to consider the adequacy of the EIR in describing the environmental consequences of the project. In reaching a decision, the City Council will consider comments received during the public review process. If the City Council determines that the EIR is adequate, it will certify the EIR and adopt a resolution, including findings of fact and a mitigation monitoring and reporting program (if applicable).

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Chapter 2
Project Description

2.1 Introduction

The City of Fremont (City) proposes to permanently close an approximately 0.8-mile stretch of "middle" Morrison Canyon Road to private motor vehicles. As shown in **Figure 2-1**, this corresponds to the area between the intersection at Morrison Canyon Road and Ridge Terrace to the point where Morrison Canyon Road meets Vargas Road.

2.2 Project Setting and Location

For the purposes of this environmental review, the following terms are assumed:

- "Lower" Morrison Canyon Road means the portion of the roadway between Mission Boulevard and Ridge Terrace
- "Middle" Morrison Canyon Road means the portion of the roadway between Ridge Terrace and Vargas Road
- "Upper" Morrison Canyon Road is the portion above the intersection with Vargas Road.

Middle Morrison Canyon Road is a one lane, bi-directional roadway located in the northeastern portion of the City.

Morrison Canyon Road touches several City neighborhoods, originating in the topographically flat Cherry/Guardino neighborhood and traversing between the Canyon Heights/Vallejo Mills/Niles Crest and Kimber Gomes neighborhoods through an area of increasingly rugged topography where it intersects with Vargas Road.

In the project area, middle Morrison Canyon Road is a winding road, approximately nine feet wide at its narrowest point. Some sections include an asphalt berm to separate the road from a steep embankment. The road cuts through often unstable hillside slopes that drop several hundred feet to Morrison Creek (part of the Mission Creek watershed).

Historically, Morrison Canyon Road was a dirt/gravel trail providing limited access to upper Ridge Terrace and rural hillside properties north of its intersection with Vargas Road. In more recent years, middle Morrison Canyon Road has been successively paved and has received chip seal maintenance treatments over the years, as necessary. The road continues to receive regular maintenance attention due to hillside/roadway sloughing. Because the narrowest parts of the roadway are along steep hillsides and heavily vegetated areas, City maintenance efforts have also included clearance of landslides, brush, and trees obstructing the roadway.

Since November 2018, middle Morrison Canyon Road has been subject to a temporary closure enacted by City Council. However, as described further in Section 3.3.1, for informational purposes and to provide a conservative analysis of project impacts, the City is utilizing an alternative environmental baseline. Instead of basing the analyses on existing physical conditions, the environmental analyses in this document use a baseline, for the purpose of determining whether the

project may have a significant environmental effect, of the physical conditions that existed immediately prior to the November 2018 closure.

2.3 Project Background and Characteristics

2.3.1 Project Background

Prior to the temporary closure, the City had observed sharp increases in automobile traffic on Morrison Canyon Road since 2016. City traffic counts indicate a substantial number of evening weekday commuters were using Morrison Canyon Road as a means to reach I-680 Northbound via Vargas Road. The City believes the relatively recent phenomenon of highly increased usage of the road is attributable in large part to the more widespread use of global positioning system (GPS)-enabled wayfinding applications, such as Waze, Google Maps, and the like. The algorithms of such applications would show Morrison Canyon Road as a "quicker" route between central Fremont and I-680, without taking into account the narrowness and other constraints of the roadway. The data collected by the City indicate that approximately 80 percent of the total weekday vehicle traffic volume on Morrison Canyon Road is from eastbound (or uphill) vehicles traveling between 3:00 p.m. and 7:00 p.m.[1] Although Morrison Canyon Road was initially a dirt road/trail providing very limited access to hillside areas, the years since 2016 have seen it being used in a manner inconsistent with its physical constraints and historic use.

Given the narrow, winding nature of the roadway, this increase in the number of automobile trips has contributed to a considerable increase in two-way vehicle conflicts because many sections lack width for two cars to pass by each other, often requiring one vehicle to reverse to make space, a potentially challenging traffic maneuver. Given the topography and curvature of the roadway, this poses concerns regarding safety.

The increased automobile traffic also presents safety concerns for pedestrians and bicyclists who use Morrison Canyon Road for recreational purposes, including those who access Vargas Plateau Regional Park. On weekends, there are more pedestrians and bicyclists on Morrison Canyon Road than vehicles.[1] The regional park is approximately 0.4 miles northeast of the easternmost project limit on upper Morrison Canyon Road.

[1] City of Fremont. 2019. *Transportation Engineering, Major Projects, Morrison Canyon Road Traffic Safety Project*. Available: https://fremont.gov/3115/Morrison-Canyon-Road-Traffic-Safety-Proj. Accessed: October 3, 2019.

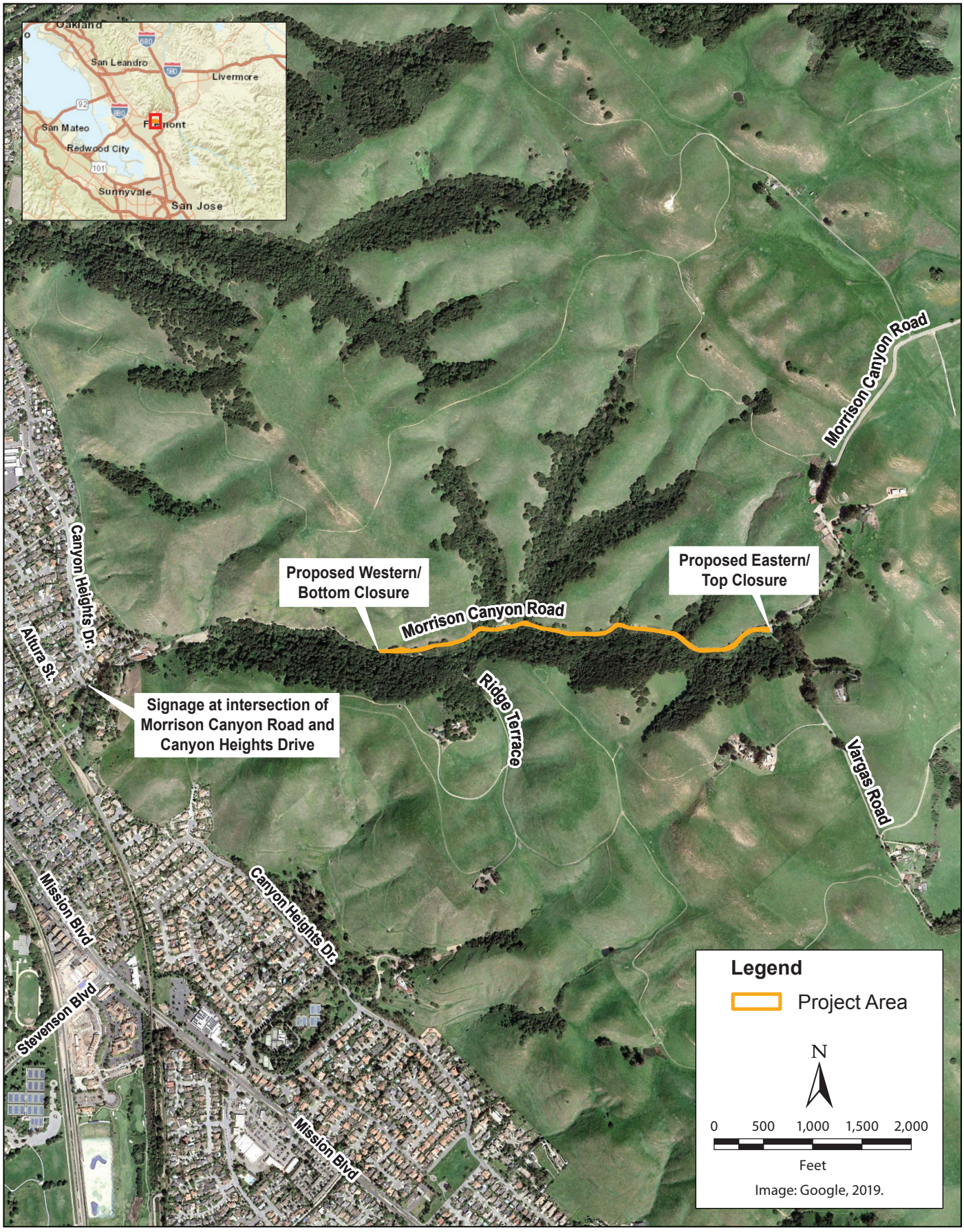

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Figure 2-1
Project Location

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In the spring of 2018, the City initiated a community outreach process to solicit feedback on project alternatives to improve the safety of Morrison Canyon Road. Following a review of the alternatives and community feedback, the City Council approved a temporary closure of middle Morrison Canyon Road in the interest of public safety, on October 16, 2018; the closure became effective on November 17, 2018. The temporary closure, which includes barricades and signage, indicating the roadway access restrictions, limits access to private motor vehicles but also allows continued access for emergency vehicles, emergency access for local residents within the rural hillside area, and non-vehicular uses (pedestrian and bicycle). The temporary closure is achieved through the use of flexible plastic barricades with a hinged base that can be mounted by most automobiles and navigated by pedestrians and bicyclists. Since the November 2018 closure, City staff have made efforts to contact the developers of various GPS-enabled wayfinding applications to advise of the closure.

2.3.2 Project Characteristics

The project is the long-term closure of middle Morrison Canyon Road, which as discussed above, has been subject to a temporary closure since November 2018. The City would achieve the project by permanently retaining the temporarily erected barricades and thus continuing the closure of middle Morrison Canyon Road to private automobile traffic. The project would achieve road closure by retaining the temporary barricades at two locations on Morrison Canyon Road:

1. The intersection of Morrison Canyon Road and Ridge Terrace; and
2. The intersection of Morrison Canyon Road and Vargas Road (refer to **Figure 2-1**).

Figure 2-2 depicts the barricades and signage that would become permanent as part of the project. The barricades consist of five to 10 flexible pylons, which are installed across the roadway at the two closure intersections. The pylons, which are made of flexible plastic and have a hinged base, are bolted to the pavement, allowing them to be mounted by both emergency and non-emergency vehicles. Pedestrians and bicyclists can pass between the pylons.

The signs have solar-powered beacons affixed on top. With the exception of new signage, which would be similar to that shown in **Figure 2-2** and placed at the side of the roadway near the Canyon Heights Drive intersection, the proposed project would remain within the existing right-of-way. Directional signs or indicators of the designated evacuation route would be provided within the right-of-way at the intersection of Vargas Road and Morrison Canyon Road to eliminate the immediate need for emergency response personnel for traffic control during an evacuation event until emergency personnel arrive.

No heavy construction equipment would be required. Furthermore, the proposed project would not require any demolition activities.

Although access to Ridge Terrace would be retained and the barricades would remain mountable by most automobiles and all emergency vehicles, the City anticipates that the permanent closure between Ridge Terrace and Vargas Road would effectively eliminate cut-through traffic caused by drivers seeking to travel between I-680 and State Route (SR) 238 (Mission Boulevard).

Under proposed project conditions, the City would continue to maintain Morrison Canyon Road so that the roadway remains usable by pedestrians, bicyclists, and emergency vehicles.

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1. Proposed signage on Morrison Canyon Road at Vargas Road intersection.

2. Proposed barricades on Morrison Canyon Road at Ridge Terrace intersection.

3. Proposed barricades and signage at Morrison Canyon Road and Vargas Road intersection.

Source: ICF, 2019.

ICF Graphics ... 00036.19 (10-25-2019) tm

Figure 2-2
Proposed Barricades and Signage
(1 of 2)

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4. Proposed Signage at Morrison Canyon Road and Canyon Heights Drive.

Source: City of Fremont, 2019.

ICF Graphics ... 00036.19 (10-25-2019) tm

Figure 2-2
Proposed Barricades and Signage
(2 of 2)

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2.4 Project Objectives

The City has developed the following primary objectives regarding the proposed permanent closure of middle Morrison Canyon Road to private automobiles to satisfy the requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Statute and State CEQA Guidelines Section 15124(b):

1. Improve safety conditions along Morrison Canyon Road
2. Eliminate the use of Morrison Canyon Road and Vargas Road as a route for commuter traffic between Mission Boulevard and I-680
3. Substantially reduce the occurrence of two-way automobile traffic on Morrison Canyon Road
4. Substantially reduce conflicts between vehicles and pedestrians/bicyclists on Morrison Canyon Road
5. Retain Morrison Canyon Road as a route for emergency vehicle access to serve the hillside community
6. Retain the lower portion of Morrison Canyon Road as an open roadway to serve properties with driveway access at Ridge Terrace
7. Maintain a pedestrian/bicycle access route from Fremont's Central District to the open space resources along upper Morrison Canyon Road.

2.5 Intended Uses of This EIR

The purpose of this EIR is to identify and analyze potentially significant environmental impacts that would occur if the project were to be approved and implemented and to recommend mitigation measures or project alternatives to substantially lessen or avoid significant impacts. The EIR is not intended to, nor does it, recommend approval or denial of a project nor any decision on the project's merits.

The City is the lead agency under CEQA and responsible for review and certification of the EIR. The lead agency is required to consider the information in this EIR, along with any other relevant information, before approving or denying the project.

The environmental review and certification process includes:

- Publication and circulation of the draft EIR for a 45-day public review period
- Preparation of a final EIR that includes written responses to comments received on the draft EIR and any errata or revisions to the draft EIR.

The City Council must certify the final EIR before taking any action on the project itself. The nature of the project does not require any other permit from any other City board or outside public agency. Nonetheless, the City will continue to engage with interested agencies throughout the environmental review process (which may include Alameda County and East Bay Regional Parks District).

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