



Memorandum

To: Lizzy Hummel, District Environmental Branch Chief, Caltrans District 10
From: Sambath Chrun, Deputy Director Engineering Services, Stanislaus County
Laura Comstock, Senior Associate Environmental Planner, GPA Consulting
Date: November 13, 2024
Subject: Seventh Street Bridge Replacement Project BRLS 5938(167) Section 4(f) *De Minimis* Addendum Memorandum

1. INTRODUCTION

This Section 4(f) *de minimis* Addendum Memorandum is prepared for the Seventh Street Bridge Replacement Project. During the Project Approval/Environmental Document Phase, a Section 4(f) *de minimis* Impact Determination for the Tuolumne River Regional Park (TRRP) Gateway Parcel was approved as part of the NEPA documentation, and a Final Environmental Assessment (Final EA) and Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) was certified in August 2019.

During Final Design, further refinements during the design process led Stanislaus County to incorporate minor changes to areas outside of the initial study limits. These changes include, but are not limited to, securing a temporary construction easement to provide more room during construction with the potential to result in construction cost savings, slightly shifting the project alignment to minimize impacts to the adjacent mobile home park and other businesses south of the river, tying into the railroad pedestrian crossing to the existing sidewalk to improve overall safety at a critical intersection along B Street, and incorporating a park maintenance access driveway off Tuolumne Boulevard that had to be expanded beyond initial study limits due to steep driveway grades and limited truck movements.

Additionally, at the time of the 2019 Section 4(f) *de minimis* Determination, the TRRP Gateway Parcel was a planned resource and no recreational amenities were located inside the parcel. Since then, the TRRP Gateway Parcel was developed and the following recreational amenities are present: multiple nature seating areas, outdoor classroom, riverwalk trail and a pedestrian bridge.

There are two resources subject to Section 4(f) located in the 7th Street Bridge Project (project) study area previously analyzed in 2019: the historic 7th Street Bridge (also known as “Lion Bridge”) and the TRRP Gateway Parcel. The purpose of this supplemental Section 4(f) *de minimis* Memorandum is to provide an updated project description with revised study limits and assess the impacts on the TRRP Gateway Parcel. The refined design of the project will not change the impacts to the previously analyzed 7th Street Bridge



as the bridge will still be demolished and replaced with a new bridge. Therefore, the Programmatic Section 4(f) Evaluation for the 7th Street Bridge from the 2019 Final Programmatic Section 4(f) remains valid and will not need to be re-evaluated due to the scope changes.

2. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Introduction

The Stanislaus County Department of Public Works (County), in cooperation with the City of Modesto, the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans), and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) are proposing to replace Seventh Street Bridge (Bridge No. 38C-0023) at the Tuolumne River (Project).

A majority of the proposed Project is located within the jurisdiction of the County; however, the northern portion is within the City of Modesto. Therefore, the proposed Project is a joint venture between both agencies with the County serving as the Lead Agency pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). Caltrans, under authority delegated by the FHWA, is the Lead Agency pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

CEQA documentation was completed in May 2017 with the County's approval of the Final Environmental Impact Report and Notice of Determination. NEPA documentation, a Final Environmental Assessment (Final EA) and Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI), was certified in August 2019. A No-Build Alternative and four Build Alternatives were assessed during the environmental documentation: Alternative 2A – Existing Bridge Alignment (Arch Bridge), Alternative 2B – Existing Bridge Alignment (Standard Bridge), Alternative 3 – Existing Alignment with Staged Construction, and Alternative 4 – Retrofit and New Two-Lane Bridge. Alternative 2B, Existing Bridge Alignment (Standard Bridge), was identified as the Preferred Alternative.

Existing Bridge

The Seventh Street Bridge is an existing 2-lane roadway crossing over the Tuolumne River, connecting downtown Modesto with unincorporated Stanislaus County. The Seventh Street Bridge is a rare surviving example of a cantilevered concrete ("canticrete") arched bridge, consisting of steel trusses encased in concrete. The 1,170-foot long bridge was built in 1916 and is composed of 14 arched spans. Although the bridge is open to traffic, it has been weight restricted to four tons gross load since 1979.

Purpose and Need

Project Purpose

The purpose of the proposed Project is to create a structurally and functionally sufficient bridge crossing of the Tuolumne River along the 7th Street corridor.



Project Need

The proposed Project is needed to correct structural and hydraulic deficiencies, increase the capacity of the 7th Street corridor, and to improve safety for vehicles, bicycles, and pedestrians. On a scale of 0 (low) to 100 (high), the existing Seventh Street Bridge is listed on the Caltrans Local Agency Bridge List with a sufficiency rating of 5.1. The extremely low sufficiency rating is due to structural deficiencies associated with deteriorated structural and hydrologic conditions and functional deficiencies due to inadequate width and limited vehicle capacity.

Proposed Project

The proposed Project would include replacement of the existing structurally and functionally deficient bridge with a new 1,237.75-foot long, 8-span arched concrete box girder bridge. The replacement bridge would be 79 feet wide with two lanes of traffic in each direction. The bridge would accommodate a 5-foot wide Class II Bike Lane in each direction. A separated pedestrian walkway along both sides would range in size, with the shared pathway on the west side approximately 10 feet wide, and a sidewalk on the east side approximately five feet wide. Pedestrian railings would be provided on both sides of the entire length of the bridge and vista points on the bridge would provide overlooks to the park. The bridge profile would be raised to meet the current hydraulic design requirements.

The intersection of 7th Street with B Street/Tuolumne River Boulevard would be reconfigured to accommodate four lanes of traffic. The intersection of 7th Street with Crows Landing Road would be similar to the existing “Y” configuration, but the intersection would be signalized and would prioritize traffic flow onto and from Crows Landing Road. Full and partial property takes involving several privately-owned parcels would be required. Construction of the replacement bridge would also include the following changes to the streets north and south of the bridge:

- Realigning 7th Street to accommodate the new bridge alignment.
- Adding sidewalk and driveways along both South 7th Street and Crows Landing Road.
- Adding a right-turn pocket to eastbound Tuolumne Boulevard.
- Adding a right-turn pocket to southbound North 7th Street.
- Reconfiguring the C Street/Sierra Drive intersection.
- Restriping for parking on Sierra Drive.

Utility improvements for the project would include relocation of existing overhead and underground utilities and a new City of Modesto water line installation. The water line would be installed within the new bridge and below ground beyond the bridge limits. In addition, a portion of the water line at the south end of the project would be installed via jack-and-bore method underneath the existing railroad tracks. The installation of the new water line beyond the bridge limits would likely occur concurrently with the other roadway improvements.

Construction is anticipated to begin as early as January 2025 with a duration of three years. Construction would require removal of the existing bridge structure. For the duration of construction, 7th Street would



be closed within the project area, including the existing roadway connection from 7th Street to Zeff Road/River Road. A detour for vehicles would be provided. No improvements are proposed along the detour routes.

3. ACTIVITIES, FEATURES, AND ATTRIBUTES OF THE PROPERTY

Per the Caltrans Section 4(f) Decision Tree (SER Vol. 1, Chapter 20), Section 4(f) is applicable because there is federal funding from Caltrans for the project, and there is a publicly owned park and recreation area within the project area. The TRRP is co-managed by Stanislaus County and the City of Modesto, and consists of over 500 acres of parkland that runs along seven miles of the Tuolumne River. The TRRP consists of five major areas: the Legion Park/Airport Area, the Gateway Parcel, Mancini Park, the Dryden Park Golf Course Area, and the Carpenter Road Area. The project intersects with the Gateway Parcel which is approximately 90 acres in size(see **Exhibit 1**).

As described in the next section, the TRRP is a 4(f) property affected by the project that was previously evaluated under Section 4(f) in the 2019 Final EA. However, refinements during final design led Stanislaus County to incorporate minor changes to areas outside of the initial study limits and the permanent and temporary impacts on the 4(f) resource has changed from what was previously analyzed. Additionally, during the initial 2019 Section 4(f) *de minimis* findings, the TRRP Gateway Parcel did not contain any existing recreational amenities as it was a planned park; since then, the planned park improvements have been implemented and are existing. These amenities include park trails, an outdoor amphitheater and other recreational amenities (see **Figure 1** and **Figure 2**).



Figure 1. Existing Recreational Amenities – Trail View



Figure 2. Existing Recreational Amenities – Bird's Eye View



4. CHANGES TO USE OF THE SECTION 4(F) PROPERTY (*DE MINIMIS*)

Permanent Incorporation

The project would result in the permanent incorporation of 0.235 acre of parkland from the TRRP Gateway Parcel, west of the railroad (see **Exhibit 1**). Permanent incorporation would occur along the existing and proposed bridge alignment, northernly bridge approach, and an area adjacent to Tuolumne Boulevard for the proposed maintenance vehicle access road. The TRRP Gateway Parcel now contains developed park trails, an outdoor amphitheater, and other recreational amenities.

The existing bridge and approach footprint within the TRRP Gateway Parcel is approximately 0.17 acre. The bridge replacement would result in approximately 24 new bridge piers and one abutment to be constructed within the TRRP Gateway Parcel (0.025 acre). This is a very minor increase and the permanent incorporation would be relatively unchanged from the anticipated 462 square feet (0.01 acre) of permanent impacts anticipated and analyzed in the 2019 Section 4(f) *de minimis* findings. Additionally, the expanded approach to the bridge would be constructed resulting in approximately 0.17 acre of permanent incorporation within the TRRP Gateway Parcel. However, removal of the existing bridge would also require the removal of the existing footings which would total approximately 4,349 square feet (0.10 acre); this would result in an anticipated net gain in park area under the bridge.

A park maintenance vehicle access driveway currently exists at the northern bridge entrance along 7th Street. However, due to the bridge replacement, a new temporary and permanent maintenance vehicle access driveway will be constructed. Through coordination with the City's park maintenance staff, the design was refined to add the maintenance access driveway adjacent to Tuolumne Boulevard to improve temporary construction access as well as overall permanent functionality of the access driveway. Portions of the proposed access road are located within the TRRP Gateway Parcel and would result in 0.04 acre of permanent incorporation of park. However, this area within the park does not currently contain any permanent recreational amenities and no planned features are proposed in this area. Therefore, no permanent impacts to recreational amenities in this area are anticipated.

The new bridge piers, abutments, approach, and the park maintenance vehicle access driveway would result in a total of 0.235 acre of permanent incorporation within the TRRP Gateway Parcel, which is approximately 0.26 percent of the total park size. Once construction is complete, the new bridge and park maintenance vehicle access road would not interfere with any recreational features in the project area.

Existing public access and recreational opportunities with the TRRP Gateway Parcel will be unaffected by the project on a permanent basis. Therefore, permanent incorporation of the park would not adversely affect the features, attributes, or activities qualifying the TRRP Gateway Parcel for protection under Section 4(f).



Temporary Impacts

The project would require a temporary construction easement (TCE) on 8.64 acres of parkland from Tuolumne Boulevard to the Tuolumne River (see **Exhibit 2**). The temporary occupancy area in the 2019 *de minimis* findings was approximately 7.51 acres, but due to the refinement of design and need for ESA fencing the TCE area has changed. The location of ESA fencing resulted in a reduction of temporary occupancy area of 0.52 acre near the river, and the temporary occupancy area was extended to include an additional 1.66 acres (described below).

Due to the development of planned park amenities since 2019, the project limits within the TRRP Gateway Parcel extended west to include the entirety of the now-existing trail extending through the park, and extended east between the bridge and railroad (1.66 acre). The existing trail would be utilized by the contractor during construction and would be replaced/repaired in-kind if damaged.

The TCE would be needed for access, construction staging, and stockpiling areas during construction. Additionally, construction would include establishment of the Environmentally Sensitive Area (ESA) fencing throughout the Project Area, including portions of the TRRP Gateway Parcel. The anticipated location of the ESA fencing along the Tuolumne River in the south resulted in a reduction of 0.52 acre needed for temporary occupancy from what was previously analyzed in the 2019 *de minimis* findings. ESA fencing would remain installed and maintained throughout construction.

Access to all the parts of the park would be maintained during construction except for temporary periods when the area directly under the new bridge would be closed for safety purposes. Temporary impacts would not interrupt access to the TRRP Gateway Parcel, and the park would remain open for public use during construction and operation of the project. During construction, the park and its trails would still be accessible from other locations and detour routes would be provided for trails that would be temporarily occupied by staging equipment. Once construction is complete, areas that are temporarily occupied would be fully restored. Therefore, temporary occupancy of the park would not adversely affect the features, attributes, or activities qualifying the TRRP Gateway Parcel for protection under Section 4(f).

5. AVOIDANCE, MINIMIZATION, AND/OR MITIGATION MEASURES

The approved 2019 Section 4(f) *de minimis* Impact Determination includes adequate avoidance, minimization, and/or mitigation measures to address impacts to the TRRP Gateway Parcel. No new measures are needed to make the *de minimis* impact finding for the TRRP Gateway Parcel.

6. PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT AND COORDINATION

The County made the Addendum to the Section 4(f) *de minimis* Finding Memo available for public review on the County's website at <http://www.stancounty.com/publicworks/projects.shtm>, the dedicated project website (www.7thStreetBridge.org), and at the office of the County's Public Works Department located at 1716 Morgan Road, Modesto, CA 95358.



The County invited public comments (by mail or email) during the public review period, which was from **November 17, 2024 to December 16, 2024** (a total of 30 days), pursuant to NEPA Guidelines and 23 Code of Federal Regulations 774.5(b)(2)(i). According to guidelines for Section 4(f) resources it states “public notice and an opportunity for public review and comment concerning the effects on the protected activities, features, or attributes of the property must be provided.”

Project staff have continued to coordinate with staff from the City of Modesto and Stanislaus County, and will continue to do so throughout the duration of the project.

7. CONCLUSION

Construction of the project would not permanently diminish any of the recreational amenities in the project area. All recreational amenities would still be accessible during construction and once construction is completed. Project actions would not result in the permanent or temporary disruption of any of the recreational features of the park. The project would result in the permanent use of recreational land; however, it is anticipated that through the existing avoidance, minimization, and mitigation measures, a determination of *de minimis* can be reached in coordination with the City of Modesto. TRRP Gateway Park will not be adversely affected.

Findings supporting a proposed determination of *de minimis* at TRRP Gateway Parcel per 23 CFR 774.7(b) are provided below:

Finding: The amount of parkland to be permanently incorporated by the project for the installation of bridge piers (0.025 acre), bridge approach (0.17 acre), and portions of a maintenance vehicle access road (0.04 acre) is a minor percentage (0.26 percent) of the total park size (90 acres). Additionally, the project will remove the existing piers that are larger in size than the new bridge piers, therefore resulting in a net gain of parkland compared to existing conditions. Project actions would not result in the permanent or temporary disruption of any of the recreational features of the park.

Finding: The amount of parkland to be temporarily occupied for access, construction staging, and stockpiling areas during construction increased from 7.51 acres to a total of 8.65 acres. This total area is a minor percentage (9.6 percent) of the total park size (90 acres).

Finding: The City of Modesto and Stanislaus County are aware of the project changes that have occurred since 2019 and have both been informed of the Addendum to the *de minimis* findings at TRRP Gateway Parcel.

Finding: This updated finding of *de minimis* impacts was released and made available for public comments for a period of 30 days.

Based on the above findings, Caltrans has concluded there would be no more than a *de minimis* impact to the TRRP Gateway Parcel as a result of the Project.

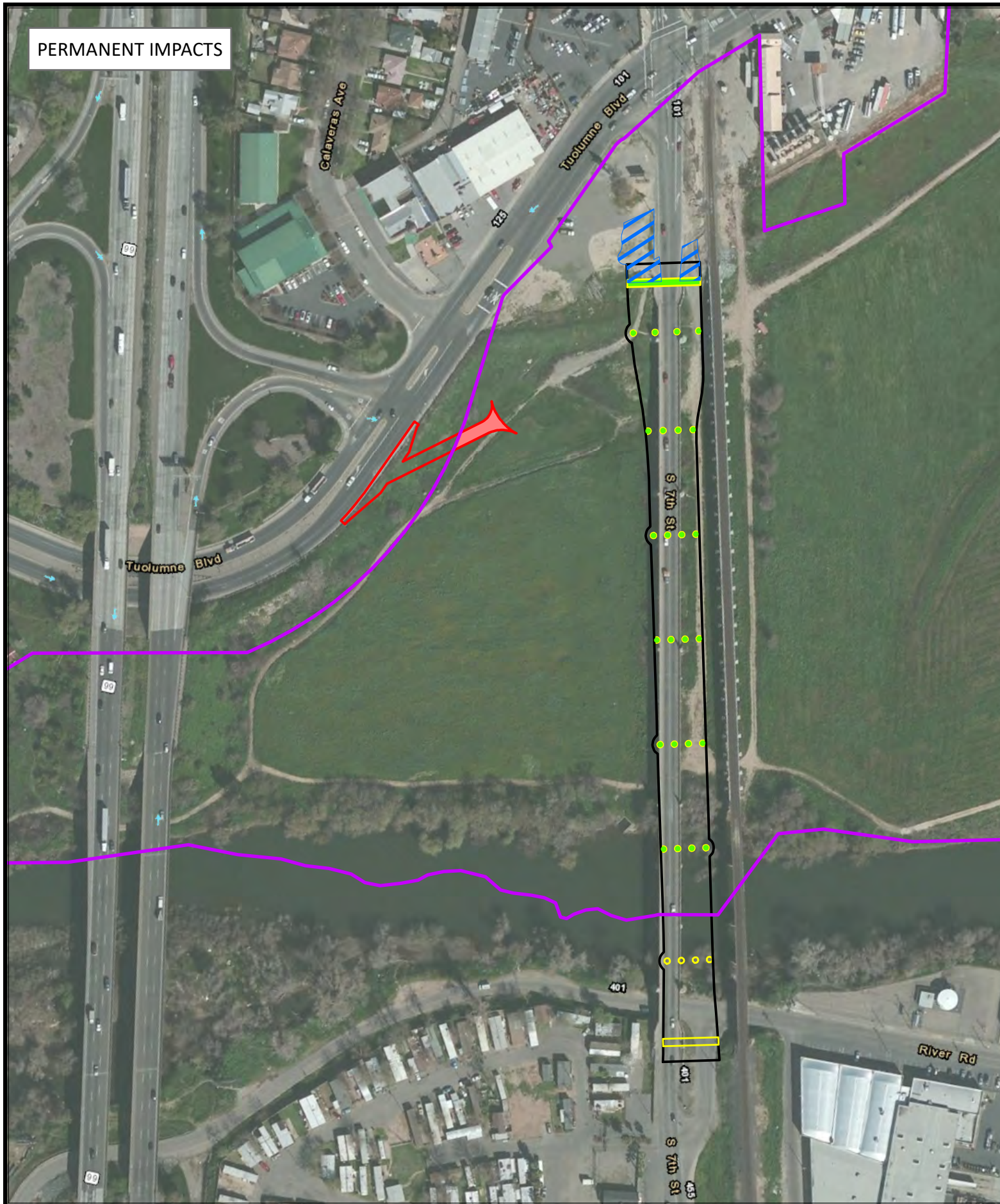


Source: ESRI 2024

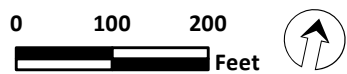


TRRP Gateway Parcel
 Project Area

**EXHIBIT 1. Section 4(f) Resources in the Project Area
Seventh Street Bridge Replacement Project**



Source: ESRI 2024



- TRRP Gateway Parcel
- Proposed Bridge Deck
- Proposed Bridge Piers and Abutments
- Permanent Impacts from Proposed Bridge Piers and Abutments (0.025 acre)
- Permanent Impacts from Proposed Permanent Access Road (0.04 acre)
- Expanded Approach to Bridge (0.17 acre)
- ESA Fencing
- Area of Temporary Occupancy During Construction (New, 1.66 acres)
- Area of Temporary Occupancy During Construction (Previously cleared, 6.99 acres)

EXHIBIT 2. Permanent and Temporary Changes to Tuolumne River Regional Park Seventh Street Bridge Replacement Project