DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS
OFFICE OF CONSTRUCTION AND FACILITIES MANAGEMENT
WASHINGTON DC 20420

16 August 2024

Subject: Environmental Assessment scoping for the proposed Village West Drive Extension and Crossing at the Riverside National Cemetery; VA NEPA ID #NCA-2024-0003

Dear Valued Stakeholder:

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), in collaboration with March Joint Powers Authority (March JPA), proposes granting an easement for the construction and operation of a Village West Drive Extension. Construction will include an overpass or underpass to ensure uninterrupted cemetery access between the eastern and western sides of the Riverside National Cemetery (RNC) at 22495 Van Buren BLVD, Riverside CA 92518 (Exhibits 1 and 2).

The purpose of the Proposed Action is for the improvement of access and traffic safety between Van Buren Blvd, to the north, and Nandina Way, to the south, for local traffic and to reduce emergency vehicles response time.

VA is preparing an environmental assessment (EA) to assess the potential environmental impacts of the Proposed Action. VA is preparing the EA according to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969 (42 U.S. Code 4321- 4370) and the NEPA implementing regulations of the Council on Environmental Quality (40 Code of Federal Regulations [CFR] 1500-1508) and VA (38 CFR Part 26). Exhibit 3 summarizes the NEPA process, including public engagement, for your reference in responding to this request.

Through this notice, VA is also providing the public with information about the undertaking and seeking public comment and input about the undertaking's effects on historic properties pursuant to Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) of 1966, as amended, (54 USC § 306108), and its implementing regulations (36 CFR Part 800 – Protection of Historic Properties). VA is using its procedures for public involvement under NEPA in lieu of public involvement requirements in Subpart B of the Section 106 regulations per 36 CFR 800.2(d)(3). This notice does not serve as an invitation to consult under Section 106, it is solely to seek and consider the views of the public. VA will initiate its Section 106 review and send invitations to consulting parties separately.

If you have comments on the scope of the EA, the range of alternatives, and environmental issues for in-depth analysis, please email your comments to vacoenvironment@va.gov with the subject line "RNC- Village West Drive".

VA will publish the Draft EA for a 30-day public review and comment period. VA will notify stakeholders, publish a notice of availability of the Draft EA in the Press Enterprise, and invite comments on the Draft EA at that time.

Respectfully,

GLENN ELLIOTT Digitally signed by GLENN ELLIOTT
Date: 2024.08.16 14:15:54 -04'00'

Glenn Elliott
Director, Project Development Services Division
Office of Construction and Facilities Management

Exhibit 1: Project Location

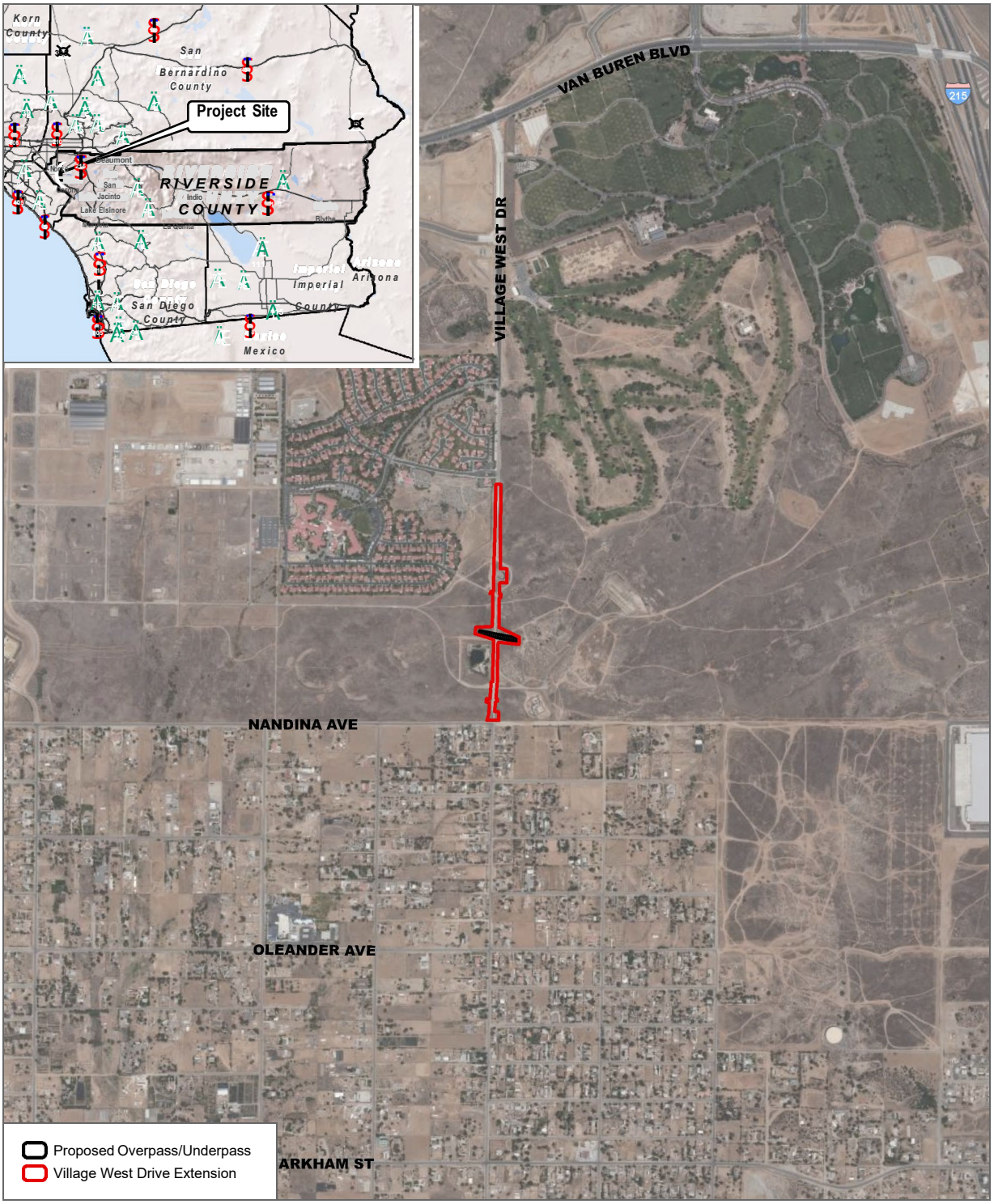


Exhibit 2: Proposed Project

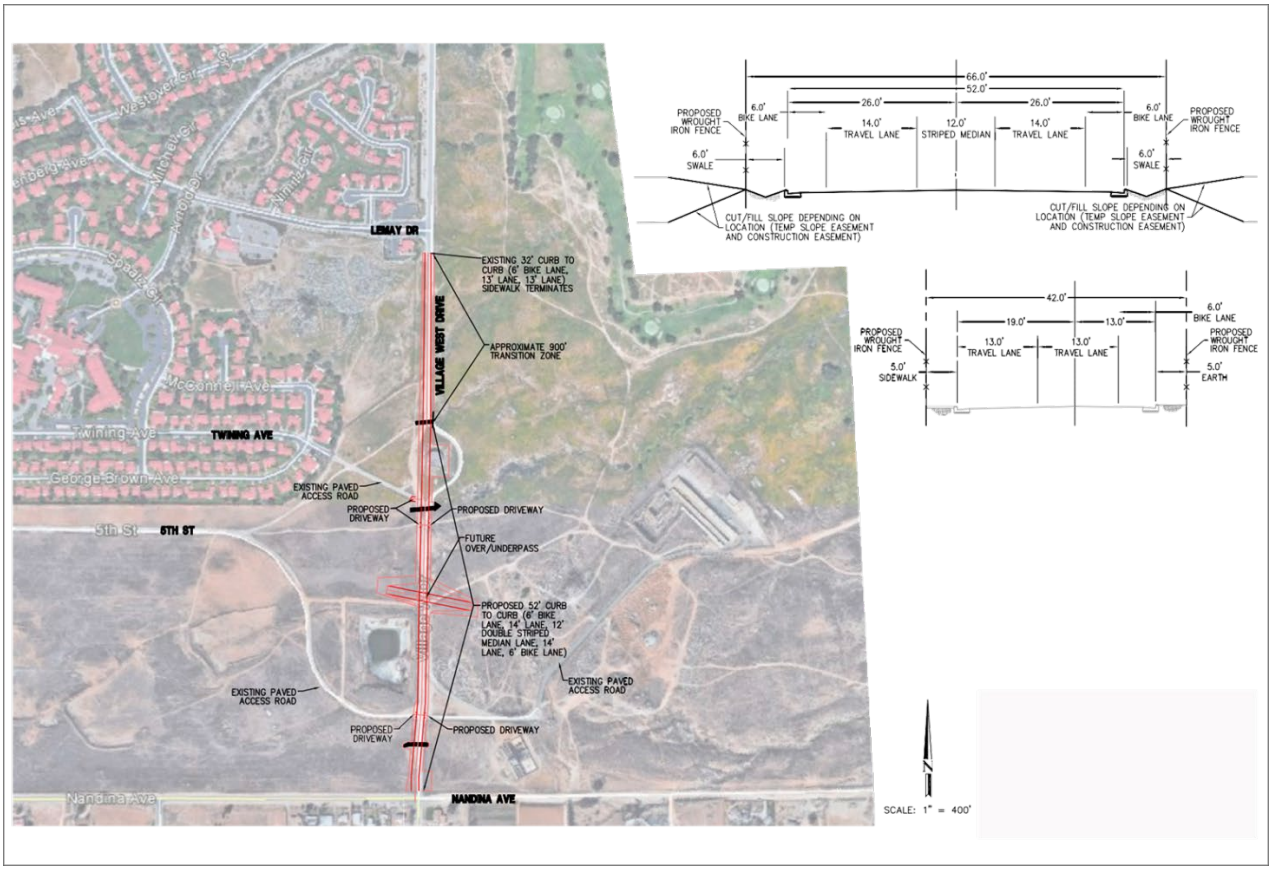


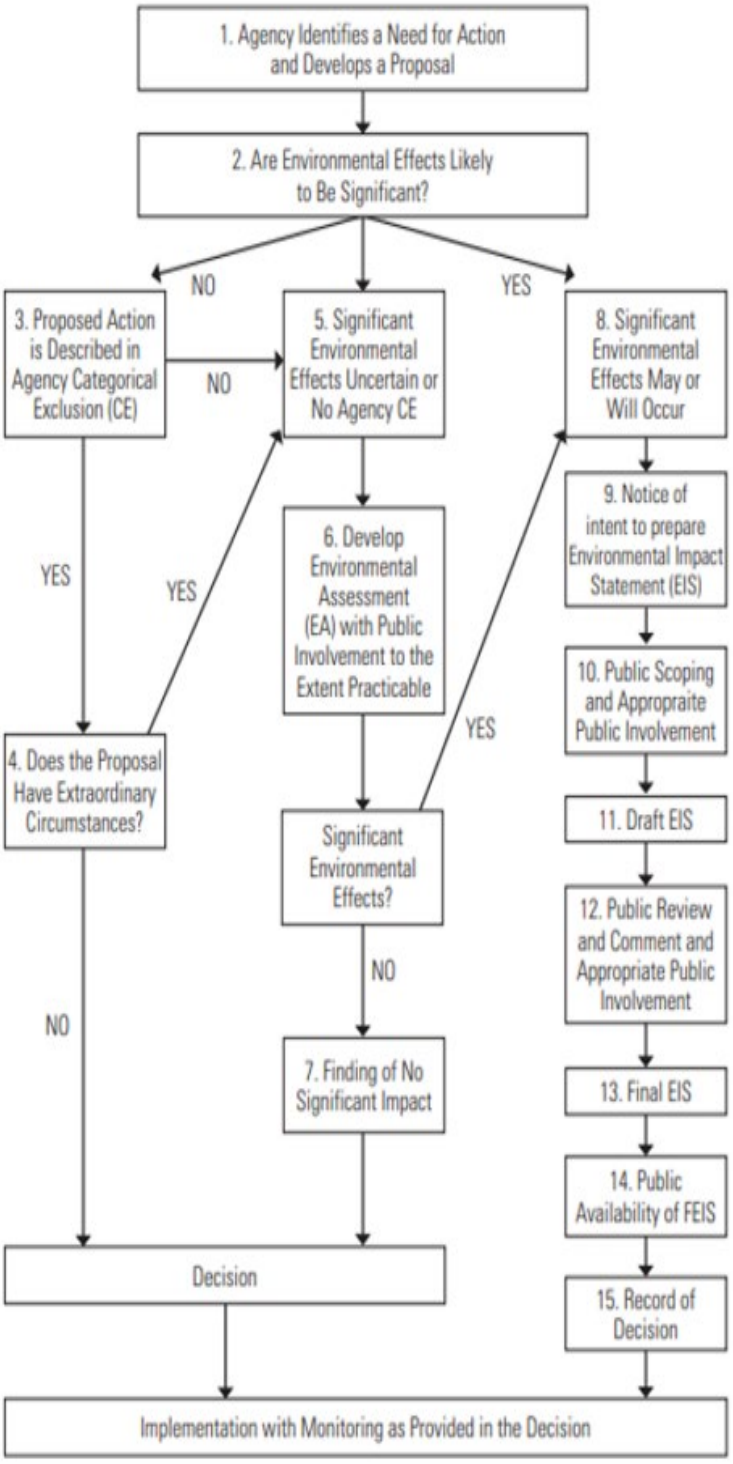
Exhibit 3. Overview of the NEPA Process

This exhibit provides an overview of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process. NEPA encourages better decisions by requiring federal agencies to consider the environmental effects of their proposed actions in making their decisions. NEPA also informs the public about federal agencies' decision making and, by way of invitations such as this one, requests your input and comments on these environmental reviews.

Federal agencies prepare environmental assessments (EAs) and environmental impact statements (EISs) to provide an opportunity to the public to learn about and be involved in the environmental reviews that are part of the federal agency decision-making process.

Comments may be the most important contribution from the public because they promote informed decision making. Comments should provide sufficient detail for the agency to understand the commenter's position and why the issues raised are important to the decision. Accordingly, comments should be clear, concise, relevant to the analysis of the proposed action, and submitted during the public comment periods.

It is important to understand that commenting on a proposal is not a "vote" on whether the proposed action should take place. Nonetheless, the information you provide during the EA and EIS process can influence the decision makers and their final decisions because NEPA requires that federal decision makers be informed of the environmental consequences of their decisions.



Source: A Citizen's Guide to NEPA – Having Your Voice Heard (https://ceq.doe.gov/get-involved/citizens_guide_to_nepa.html). Please see full document for more information.