

**SUBMITTAL TO THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS  
COUNTY OF RIVERSIDE, STATE OF CALIFORNIA**

614B



**FROM:** TLMA - Transportation Department

**SUBMITTAL DATE:**  
September 10, 2013

**SUBJECT:** Resolution No. 2013-064 - Making Responsible Agency Findings pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act; Adopting a Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Plan and Issuing Certain Limited Approvals for the Perris Valley Line Project by Authorizing Closure of Gernert Road/Poarch Road at the At-Grade Crossing of the Perris Valley Line to non-emergency traffic Adjacent to Watkins Drive, in the Box Springs Mountain Area of Unincorporated Riverside County - Fifth Supervisorial District/First Supervisorial District

**RECOMMENDED MOTION:** That the Board of Supervisors:

1. Consider the environmental effects of the Closure of Gernert Road/Poarch Road at the At-Grade Crossing of the Perris Valley Line to non-emergency traffic Adjacent to Watkins Drive, in the Box Springs Mountain Area of Unincorporated Riverside County ("Closure Project") as identified in the Final Environmental Impact Report for the Perris Valley Line Project (SCH#2009011046) prepared by the Riverside County Transportation Commission; and
2. At the Close of the Public Hearing, Adopt Resolution No. 2013-064 - Making Responsible Agency Findings Pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act, Adopting a Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Plan and Issuing Certain Limited Approvals for the PVL Project by Authorizing Closure of Gernert Road/Poarch Road at the At-Grade Crossing of the Perris Valley Line to non-emergency traffic Adjacent to Watkins Drive, in the Box Springs Mountain Area of Unincorporated Riverside County; and

**BACKGROUND:** (Continued on Page 2)

**Patricia Romo**  
Assistant Director of Transportation

Juan C. Perez  
Director of Transportation and Land Management

WJH  
Attachments: Listed on page 3

REVIEWED BY EXECUTIVE OFFICE

FORM APPROVED COUNTY COUNSEL

DATE 9-3-13 AG  
BY: Synthia M. Gunzel  
Departmental Concurrence Alex Gann

Consent  
 Policy  
 Consent  
 Policy  
 Dept't Recomm.:  
 Per Exec. Ofc.:

Prev. Agn. Ref. 2-24 of 7/30/13; 2-23 of 8/20/13

District: 5/1

Agenda Number:

9-1

The Honorable Board of Supervisors

RE: Resolution No. 2013-064 - Making Responsible Agency Findings pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act; Adopting a Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Plan and Issuing Certain Limited Approvals for the Perris Valley Line Project by Authorizing Closure of Gernert Road/Poarch Road at the At-Grade Crossing of the Perris Valley Line to non-emergency traffic Adjacent to Watkins Drive, in the Box Springs Mountain Area of Unincorporated Riverside County - Fifth Supervisorial District/First Supervisorial District

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**RECOMMENDED MOTION:** (continued from Page 1)

3. Authorize the Closure of Gernert Road/Poarch Road at the At-Grade Crossing of the Perris Valley Line to Non-Emergency Traffic Adjacent to Watkins Drive, in the Box Springs Mountain Area, subject to the attached Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Plan, and based upon the findings and conclusions incorporated in Resolution No. 2013-064; and
4. Direct the Clerk of the Board to file the Notice of Determination with the County Clerk and the Governor's Office of Planning and Research within 5 working days of approval of this Closure Project.

**BACKGROUND:** (Continued from Page 1)

The Riverside County Transportation Commission's ("RCTC") Perris Valley Line Project ("PVL Project") is a 24-mile extension of the Metrolink 91 Line service, which currently provides service from Riverside to downtown Los Angeles and Orange County. The PVL Project would bring commuter rail service from downtown Riverside to the city of Perris; thus, linking several communities to major employment centers and to the Southern California commuter rail network. The County of Riverside ("County"), as a member of RCTC, frequently works in concert and cooperatively with RCTC to further the overall goals of RCTC and the County to improve and provide services and facilities to the public.

RCTC, as lead agency, certified the California Environmental Quality Act ("CEQA") Final Environmental Impact Report ("EIR") for the Perris Valley Line Project on July 25, 2011. A Final Supplemental Environmental Assessment ("FSEA") pursuant to The National Environmental Protection Act was prepared and approved by RCTC and the Finding of No Significant Impact ("FONSI") was issued on May 24, 2012. The EIR identified and analyzed the closure of the Poarch Road Crossing to public non-emergency traffic access; while keeping it accessible to public safety agencies for emergency access only.

RCTC has sought assistance from the County to implement a part of the PVL Project by requesting the closure of the Gernert Road/Poarch Road at the at-grade crossing (Crossing) to non-emergency traffic due to the safety deficiencies and concerns identified by RCTC during its design process and completing its environmental review. The Crossing is located adjacent to Watkins Drive, directly opposite the northbound I-215 on-ramp in unincorporated Riverside County. Poarch Road is an unimproved dirt road that provides as an alternate access to a small, rural residential area of about 10 homes on the hillside northeast of the Perris Valley Line Project. The residents may choose to use the Crossing to gain access to Watkins Drive and I-215 Highway. The Crossing connects to Gernert Road, a County-maintained dirt road that links to Morton Road, which borders Moreno Valley. Gernert Road is used by some peak-hour commuter traffic by-passing a portion of I-215 when the highway is congested. The primary paved access route for this area is via Gernert Road to Morton Road to Box Springs Road. Box Springs Road is a full-access interchange on the I-215 Highway, approximately two miles from the Crossing.

The Honorable Board of Supervisors

RE: Resolution No. 2013-064 - Making Responsible Agency Findings pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act; Adopting a Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Plan and Issuing Certain Limited Approvals for the Perris Valley Line Project by Authorizing Closure of Gernert Road/Poarch Road at the At-Grade Crossing of the Perris Valley Line to non-emergency traffic Adjacent to Watkins Drive, in the Box Springs Mountain Area - Fifth Supervisorial District/First Supervisorial District

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**BACKGROUND:** (Continued from page 2)

The Crossing was found by RCTC to have several key deficiencies that would need to be addressed in order to be open to non-emergency traffic with Metrolink train usage after full implementation of the PVL Project has occurred. Some of the key deficiencies identified were: The Crossing does not have California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) crossing warning devices, the intersection of Watkins Drive and Poarch Road is not signalized, the Crossing is not wide enough to permit large vehicles to make the turn movements without crossing into opposing traffic lanes, Poarch Road (as it crosses the railroad) does not meet vertical clearance, the corner sight distance at Watkins Drive looking towards the crossing is obstructed, Gernert Road/Poarch Road is not paved at the crossing, and the stopping sight distance on Watkins Drive north of the crossing is deficient. Any improvements that would need to be made to the Crossing are governed by several stringent federal and state safety standards applicable to each part of the design of the Perris Valley Line Project.

Design alternatives to bring the Crossing up to the stringent safety standards were considered and studied by RCTC. Two alternatives were found to be possible feasible solutions. The first alternative would be to address the identified deficiencies; however, it proposed substantial reconstruction of the Crossing's surrounding streets in order to reach a minimal grade crossing. Maintaining full public access would have required substantial improvements to the street grades of Poarch Road and Watkins Drive, crossing equipment upgrades, and signalization of the intersection of Poarch Road and Watkins Drive. This alternative was identified as infeasible due to the costs and challenges in meeting the stringent federal and state safety standards for at-grade crossings. The second alternative proposed closure of the Crossing to non-emergency traffic with installation by RCTC of crossing warning devices and securing the Crossing with fencing and locked gates, accessible only to emergency vehicles. This proposed closure to non-emergency traffic was identified in the certified EIR and FSEA for the PVL Project as the most feasible solution.

RCTC received a few comments on proposed road closure identified in the EIR and FSEA for the PVL Project; to which RCTC responded. No public review period is required for CEQA purposes when a responsible agency is considering whether or not to approve the project involved. Also, although not required by CEQA, the County is holding a public hearing for the Board to receive and consider any public comments.

The closure of the Crossing would not significantly affect the traffic volumes in the area and would continue to provide access to emergency vehicles. The closure of Gernert Road/Poarch Road to non-emergency traffic would become effective at such future time when construction begins on this segment of the Perris Valley Line Project by RCTC. This action does not preclude the County from considering an improved at-grade or grade-separated crossing in the future (subject to the approval by appropriate state and federal agencies).

Attachments: Letter from RCTC

Resolution No. 2013-064 with Exhibits A-C

Notice of Determination

RCTC's PVL Resolution No 11-013 and MMRP (full EIR and EA documents including exhibits, appendices and reports found at [www.perrisvalleyline.info](http://www.perrisvalleyline.info))

Riverside County Transportation Commission

February 5, 2013

Mr. Juan C. Perez, P.E., T.E.  
Director of Transportation  
County of Riverside – Transportation Department  
4080 Lemon Street, 14<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Riverside, CA 92501

Subject: Riverside County Transportation Commission - Perris Valley Line  
Board Resolution Request - Poarch Road/Gernert Road Closure

Dear Mr. Perez:

The Riverside County Transportation Commission (RCTC) staff has concluded the plan check process for the portions of the Perris Valley Rail Line (PVL) that are under the County of Riverside's jurisdiction. At this time we are requesting that the County move forward with the resolution for the closure of Poarch Road/Gernert Road at the PVL crossing. The following are some specific details that may assist with your resolution preparation for the County's Board.

**Project Description:**

The Perris Valley Line Project (PVL) is a 24 mile extension of the Southern California Regional Rail Authority (SCRRA) 91 Line, currently providing service from Riverside to downtown Los Angeles and Orange County.

The extension would begin at a junction with the Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railway (BNSF) mainline, north of the City of Riverside and turn southeast along the San Jacinto Branch Line (SJBL). The terminus of the Line is in the City of Perris at Case Road and Mapes Road. The SJBL was purchased by the Riverside County Transportation Commission (RCTC) in 1993, and runs parallel to I-215, one of the most heavily traveled and congested freeways in the region.

Upon start up, the PVL will have four new stations; one located in the City of Riverside, one in the County of Riverside, and two in the City of Perris, CA.

**Environmental Clearance:**

RCTC certified the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the PVL on July 25, 2011. The National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA) Final Supplemental Environmental Assessment (SEA) was approved and the Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) was issued on May 24, 2012.

**Poarch Road/Gernert Road Crossing Description:**

The Poarch Road/Gernert Road at-grade crossing is located adjacent to Watkins Drive, directly opposite the northbound I-215 on ramp in unincorporated Riverside County. It is at Milepost (MP) 5.02 on the (SJBL). This crossing provides a secondary access to a small, rural residential area of about 10 homes on the hillside northeast of the PVL. Poarch Road, Gernert Road, Hill Top Drive and Crowley Lane are unpaved dirt roads that provide access to these homes. The residents use the Poarch Road at-grade crossing to gain direct access to Watkins Drive and Moreno Valley Highway SR60/I-215 freeway. The secondary access route is via Gernert Road to Morton Road to Box Springs Road. Box Springs Road is a full access interchange on the Moreno Valley Highway, approximately 2 miles from the Poarch Road Crossing.

**Poarch Road/Gernert Road Crossing Existing Condition Deficiencies:**

The improvements to the Poarch Road/Gernert Road area are governed by several standards applicable to each part of the design. Through analysis, the crossing was found to have the following key deficiencies that would need to be addressed in order to be open to non-emergency vehicular traffic: rail crossing does not have CPUC Crossing Warning Devices, intersection of Watkins Drive and Poarch Road is not signalized, the crossing is not wide enough to permit large vehicles to make the turn movements without crossing into opposing traffic lanes, Poarch Road as it crosses the railroad does not meet vertical clearance, corner sight distance at Watkins looking towards the crossing is obstructed, Poarch Road/Gernert Road is not paved at the crossing, and the stopping sight distance on Watkins Road north of the crossing is deficient.

**Justification for Poarch Road/Gernert Road Closure:**

Design alternatives to make the Poarch Road/Gernert Road rail crossing standard were developed and studied. Two alternatives were found to be feasible solutions. The first alternative addressed all of the noted deficiencies; however it proposed substantial reconstruction of the crossing's surrounding streets in order to reach a minimal grade crossing. This alternative was identified as not practical due to the cost related to the grading. The second alternative proposed crossing warning devices, closing and securing the crossing with fencing and locked gates, and providing access for emergency vehicles. Alternative two was presented and concurrence was received by both Riverside County staff and Riverside County Fire Department. This alternative was included in the PVL certified Environmental Impact Report and Final Supplemental Environmental Assessment.

Your assistance with proceeding with the County of Riverside Board's resolution of the closure of Poarch Road/Gernert Road is greatly appreciated.

Should you have any questions please call me at (951) 787-7141.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Edda Esther Rosso". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Edda" being the most prominent.

Edda Esther Rosso, P.E., Capital Projects Manager  
Riverside County Transportation Commission

cc: D. Bryan and N. Hester (Bechtel)



**NOTICE OF DETERMINATION**  
COUNTY OF RIVERSIDE TRANSPORTATION DEPARTMENT

EA No. 42588

SCH# 2009011046

**PROJECT NAME:** Gernert Road/Poarch Road Closure Project

**DESCRIPTION AND LOCATION:** The County of Riverside (County) proposes the closure of the Gernert Road/Poarch Road at the at-grade crossing to non-emergency traffic (Closure Project) due to the safety deficiencies and concerns identified and analyzed by the Riverside County Transportation Commission (RCTC), as lead agency, while completing its environmental review of the Perris Valley Line Project (PVL Project). The PVL Project is a 24-mile extension of the Metrolink 91 Line rail service which would extend commuter rail service from downtown Riverside to the City of Perris to link several communities to major employment centers and to the Southern California commuter rail network. The County, as a responsible agency and having limited approval authority for a portion of RCTC's PVL Project by authorizing closure of Gernert Road/Poarch Road at the at-grade crossing of the PVL Project to non-emergency traffic in the unincorporated Box Springs Mountain area of Riverside County. The Closure Project site is located adjacent to Watkins Drive, directly opposite the northbound I-215 on ramp in unincorporated Riverside County. Poarch Road would remain accessible to emergency vehicles only, thus the project would not result in a change in emergency access to this neighborhood. The primary access route for this area is via Gernert Road to Morton Road to Box Springs Road. This will remain open and will maintain viable access for residents in the area.

The County, as a member of RCTC frequently works in concert and cooperatively with RCTC to further the overall goals of RCTC and the County to improve and provide services and facilities to the public. RCTC has sought assistance from the County to implement a part of the PVL project by requesting the closure of the Gernert Road/Poarch Road at-grade crossing (Crossing) to non-emergency public traffic due to the safety deficiencies and concerns identified by RCTC during its design process and completing its environmental review.

**PVL PROJECT LEAD AGENCY:** Riverside County Transportation Commission

This is to advise that the County of Riverside Board of Supervisors, as a Responsible Agency, approved the above described Closure Project on \_\_\_\_\_ and has made the following determinations regarding the above described Closure Project:

1. Pursuant to CEQA Guidelines section 15096(f) the County, as a Responsible Agency, complies with CEQA by considering the environmental effects of the project the Closure of Gernert Road/Poarch Road at the At-Grade Crossing of the Perris Valley Line to non-emergency traffic Adjacent to Watkins Drive, in the Box Springs Mountain Area as identified in the Final Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the Perris Valley Line Project (SCH#2009011046) prepared by the RCTC.
2. The County has received and considered the EIR.
3. The project will not have a significant effect on the environment.
4. No considerable different feasible mitigation measures have been identified and no mitigation measures found infeasible have become feasible.
5. Mitigation measures were made as conditions of approval and a mitigation monitoring and reporting program was adopted for the Closure Project.
6. The Closure Project will not result in any new significant environmental effects not identified in the EIR, nor will it substantially increase the severity of the environmental effects identified in the EIR.

The Environmental Impact Report is available to the General Public at:

Riverside County Transportation Commission at 4080 Lemon St. 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor, Riverside, CA 92501  
County of Riverside, Transportation Department at 4080 Lemon St. 8<sup>th</sup> Floor, Riverside, CA 92501

Russell Williams Title Environmental Division Mgr. Date 9/3/13  
Russell Williams

**HEARING BODY OR OFFICER**

XX Board of Supervisors  
       Planning Commission

**ACTION ON PROJECT**

       Approval  
       Disapproval

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

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Verifying: \_\_\_\_\_ Title: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**For County Clerk Use**





City of Riverside

T.2S.R.4W.  
28

T.2S.R.4W.  
27

**ROAD  
CLOSURE**

WATKINS DR

POARCH RD

GERNERT RD S5145

GERNERT RD S5145

CENTRAL AVE

HARVARD WAY M5561

T.2S.R.4W.  
33

215

City of  
Moreno  
Valley

T.2S.R.4W.  
34

City of Riverside

SYCAMORE CANYON BLVD

MORTON RD S5267

BOX SPRINGS RD S5218



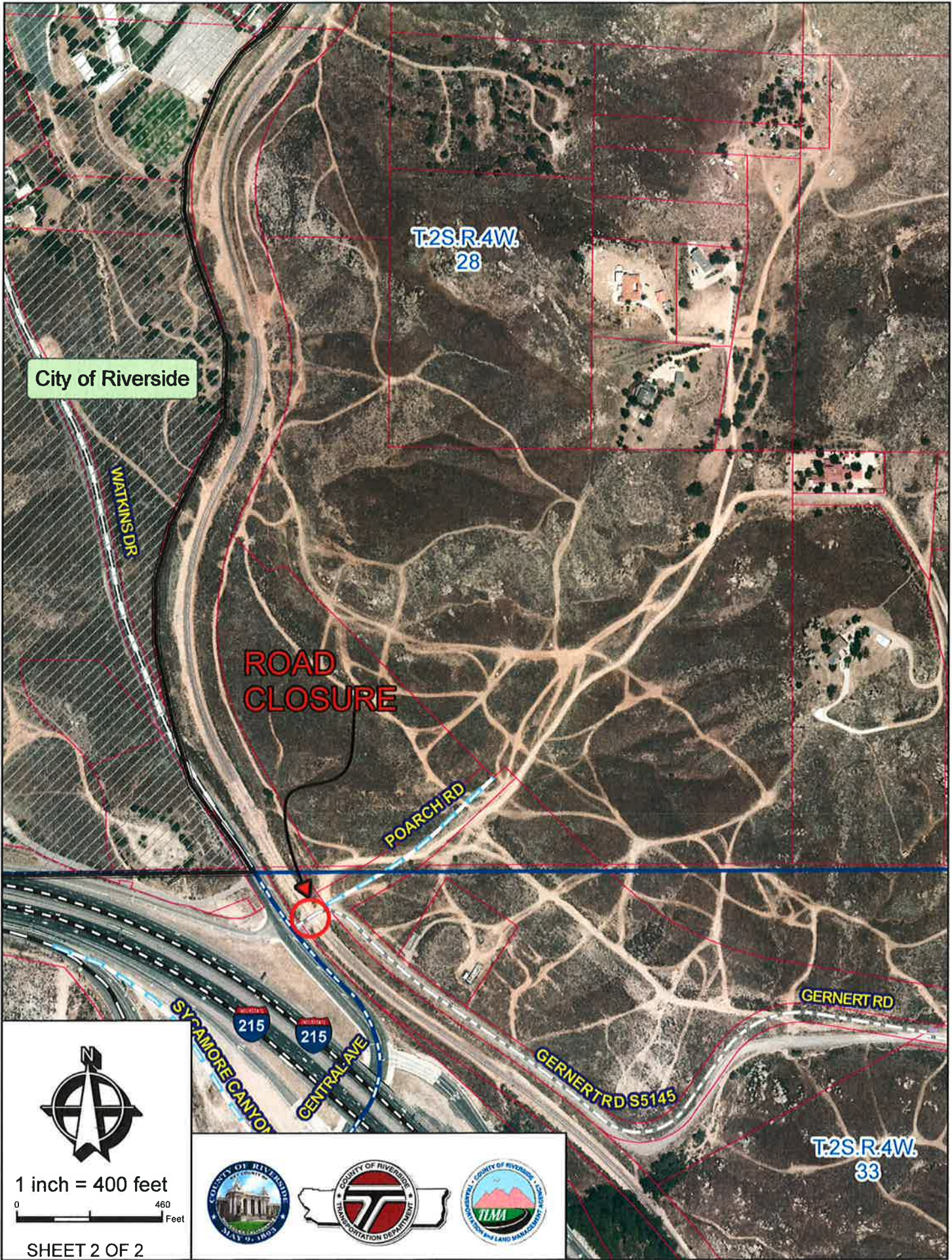
1 inch = 800 feet  
0 920 Feet

SHEET 1 OF 2



**SIDE**





City of Riverside

WATKINS DR

ROAD CLOSURE

POARCH RD

SYCAMORE CANYON

215

215

CENTRAL AVE

GERNERT RD

GERNERT RD S5145

T.2S.R.4W.  
28

T.2S.R.4W.  
33



1 inch = 400 feet



SHEET 2 OF 2

