

2.0

Environmental Setting, Impact Analysis, and Mitigation Measures

Introduction and Assumptions

This chapter describes the existing environmental conditions and assesses the environmental impacts of the proposed 2009 CTP, as described in Chapter 1. The chapter is organized by issue area; within each issue area, the environmental setting is described (including the regulatory setting), and significance criteria are established, beyond which impacts are considered to be significant. Due to the programmatic nature of this EIR, this analysis should be used in the most general sense; this analysis does not satisfy the need for site-specific surveys for individual projects. Please note that impacts of project alternatives are presented in Chapter 3.

ASSUMPTIONS REGARDING FUTURE SCENARIO

As noted earlier, this EIR evaluates the environmental impacts of the 2009 CTP in accordance with the passage of the Measure J sales tax. To assess the effects of the proposed project, it is necessary to make assumptions about future environmental conditions at the time the 2009 CTP is fully implemented. Several sections of this EIR use the results of the Authority's travel demand model to evaluate these alternatives, and this model, in turn, uses forecasts of households, employment, and income to forecast demands on the region's transportation system. These detailed forecasts are contained in the Authority's Land Use Information System, or LUIS, and uses 2030 as its horizon year. While the sales tax measure would continue until 2034, the horizon year is 2030 and this EIR assumes that all projects and programs will be in place in 2030 to provide a common basis for comparing their impacts.

The demographic projections are based on CCTA's 2006 LUIS, developed based on the Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG)'s *Projections 2005* and approved by the Authority at its February 21, 2007 meeting. These projections are based on and fully consistent

with, but not identical to, the forecasts made by ABAG. The LUIS lists the existing and forecast number of households and jobs by traffic analysis zones, or TAZs. ABAG usually prepares a new set of forecasts every other year and the Authority uses those forecasts to update the LUIS. The LUIS then goes through extensive local review to refine the forecasts to better correspond to expected growth in the different parts of the county. The 2006 LUIS incorporated considerable refinements from local jurisdictions. LUIS forecasts are available for the years 2000, 2010, 2020 and 2030, and for this EIR a 2007 baseline year was also derived.

As the Congestion Management Agency (CMA) for Contra Costa, the Authority is required to maintain a model that is consistent with MTC's model. The forecasts used in the models are within one percent of the county totals in the ABAG projections, which is the criterion for consistency with MTC guidelines that CMAs must meet.

Since 2003, ABAG has included policy assumptions in their projections for future growth in the area. These assumptions are based on "smart growth" policies such as shifting new growth towards transit and existing downtowns. It is important to note that these projections are not business as usual but require policy progress towards these goals. The Growth Management Program, including the Urban Limit Line, is an example of the type of policy that would support the land use assumptions in *Projections 2005*.

The EIR does not consider phasing of improvements or interim stages of the Plan between 2009 and 2030, as the purpose of the analysis is to evaluate the Plan as a whole.

CUMULATIVE ANALYSIS

This cumulative analysis assumes that projections described above would occur regardless of whether the proposed 2009 CTP projects are completed. The transportation, air quality, energy, greenhouse gas, and noise impact analyses are all cumulative in nature because the indicators being measured (e.g. vehicle miles traveled, emissions, noise) are the result of many interrelated activities and the significance of the proposed 2009 CTP is only apparent when it is considered in conjunction with those wider regional development patterns.

Impact Significance

For each issue area, criteria of significance are established, based on normally accepted standards for environmental review and State CEQA guidelines. Impacts are individually numbered within each issue area and are classified as follows:

- *Significant, Unavoidable.* Cannot be mitigated to a level that is less than significant.
- *Significant, but Mitigable.* Can be mitigated to a level that is less than significant.
- *Less than Significant.* An adverse effect that is not considered substantial.
- *Significant Cumulative Impact, Project Contribution Not Cumulatively Considerable.* The impact is significant when considered cumulatively, but the project does not contribute considerably to the impact.

- *Significant Cumulative Impact, Project Contribution Cumulatively Considerable.* The impact is significant when considered cumulatively, and the project contributes considerably to the impact.
- *Beneficial.* A positive effect as a result of the proposed project.

For each impact that is classified as significant, mitigation measures are recommended. The effectiveness of recommended mitigation measures is assessed and the residual impact after mitigation is identified.

Mitigation

A majority of capital improvements in the 2009 CTP will be undertaken by other agencies; CCTA will be an agency through which portions of monies for the improvements will be distributed. Thus, where appropriate, mitigation measures identified later in this chapter establish actions that CCTA would require of the project sponsors.

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