
Chapter 6

Other CEQA Considerations

This section presents other environmental issues that are of particular significance to CEQA. It includes a discussion of significant impacts and irreversible environmental changes, cumulative effects, and growth-inducing impacts.

Section 6.1 Significant and Irreversible Environmental Changes

This section supplements Section 5.4 of the 2005 Final EIR, Section 6.1 of the 2007 Final SEIR, and Section 4.1 of the 2014 Subsequent IS/MND. It generally evaluates the effect of the project on nonrenewable resources. The proposed changes to the approved project would not affect the conclusions of the 2005 Final EIR and the 2007 Final SEIR on the potential for significant and irreversible environmental changes.

A commitment of a resource is considered irreversible when its use limits the future options for its use. Irreversible changes may include current or future uses of non-renewable resources, and secondary or growth-inducing impacts that commit future generations to similar uses. In accordance with CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.2(c), this section evaluates the effect of the proposed changes to the approved project associated with three distinct categories of significant irreversible changes: changes in land use that would commit future generations to specific uses, consumption of nonrenewable resources, and irreversible changes from environmental actions.

The approved project and the proposed changes to the approved project would commit a similar amount of land resources due to the right-of-way needs within the corridor. The commitment of long-term land resources for the light rail system is consistent with Envision San José 2040 General Plan, as discussed in Section 3.11, *Land Use*, of the Second Subsequent IS. The proposed changes would not commit future generations to or introduce changes in land use that would vary from the existing conditions or planned development by the City of San Jose.

Non-renewable energy is the primary resource that would be irreversibly affected by the proposed changes. As discussed in Section 3.7, *Energy*, of the Second Subsequent IS, it is anticipated that the proposed replacement of the at-grade track alignment with an aerial

guideway would result in slightly less energy consumption compared to the approved project because the elevated guideway would allow light rail vehicles to avoid traffic signal delay that would occur at intersections for an at-grade alignment. By avoiding traffic signal delay, this proposed change to the project would eliminate the need for additional energy required for light rail vehicle accelerations at intersections. Thus, the system would operate more efficiently, which would lead to lower energy consumption. Although the acceleration effect is anticipated to be minor, this proposed change to the approved project would result in lower energy consumption compared to the impacts previously identified and analyzed for the approved project.

Similar to the approved project, the construction and operation of the proposed changes would entail the irreversible and irretrievable commitment of energy and human resources, including labor required for planning, design, construction, and operations.

The use of these resources would be irrecoverable; however, they are not in short supply, and their use would not affect the continued availability and supply of these resources.

Based on the analysis above, no new significant and irreversible effects or a substantial increase in the severity of previously identified significant and irreversible effects would occur.

Section 6.2 Analysis of Cumulative Effects

This section supplements Section 5.5 of the 2005 Final EIR, Section 6.2 of the 2007 Final SEIR, and Section 4.2 of the 2014 Subsequent IS/MND. It generally evaluates the incremental effect of the proposed changes to the approved project on the environment when considered in conjunction with closely related past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future projects.

The 2005 Final EIR and the 2007 Final SEIR identified significant and unavoidable cumulative effects to transportation at the intersections of Capitol Expressway and Story Road (TRN-2a and TRN-8b), Ocala Avenue (TRN-2b and TRN-8c), Capitol Avenue (TRN-8a), and Quimby Road (TRN-8e). According to the transportation analysis in the 2014 Subsequent IS/MND, the approved project would not result in cumulative effects to transportation at the intersections of Capitol Expressway and Story Road (TRN-2a and TRN-8b) and Quimby Road (TRN-8e), and would result in a reduction in the effect to less than significant with mitigation at Capitol Avenue. As discussed in Section 5.1, *Transportation*, of the SEIR-2, the proposed changes to the approved project would result in significant and unavoidable cumulative effects to transportation at the Capitol Expressway and Story Road (TRN-2a and TRN-8b) and Capitol Expressway and Ocala Avenue (TRN-2b and TRN-8c). Due to recent geometric changes at the intersection of Capitol Expressway and Capitol Avenue, the SEIR-2 no longer identifies a less than significant effect with mitigation at this location.

The 2007 Final SEIR also identified new significant and unavoidable impacts to energy and environmental justice. The 2014 Subsequent IS/MND determined that no new

significant cumulative effects or a substantial increase in the severity of previously identified significant cumulative effects would occur to energy and environmental justice.

In the SEIR-2, new significant and unavoidable impacts associated with the proposed changes to the approved project were identified for air quality and climate change (construction) as well as environmental justice. In addition, in the SEIR-2, significant and unavoidable impacts with increased severity associated with the proposed changes to the approved project were identified for transportation (operation and construction) as well as noise and vibration (operation and construction).

A cumulative analysis evaluates the incremental effect of the project on the environment when considered in conjunction with closely related past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future projects. Cumulative impacts related to transportation, noise, and air quality (during operation and construction), are described and evaluated in Section 5.1, *Transportation*; Section 5.3, *Noise and Vibration*; and Section 5.4; *Air Quality and Climate Change*; of the SEIR-2, respectively. Based on the analysis in the sections, the proposed changes to the approved project would disproportionately affect minority and low-income populations. Thus, the proposed changes would have a cumulative impact on environmental justice (EJ-1). This impact is “Significant and Unavoidable.”

Section 6.3 Growth-Inducing Impacts

This section supplements Section 5.6 of the 2005 Final EIR, Section 6.3 of the 2007 Final SEIR, and Section 4.3 of the 2014 Subsequent IS/MND. It generally evaluates the potential of the proposed changes to the approved project to directly or indirectly foster economic or population growth, or the construction of new housing.

The 2005 Final EIR concluded that the approved project is generally consistent with projected and planned growth in the region and in the project area. However, the 2005 Final EIR did acknowledge that the approved project could have an indirect growth-inducing effect by accelerating planned growth in a more compact, transit-oriented form, particularly in and around planned light rail stations.

The proposed changes to the approved project would not affect the conclusions of the 2005 Final SEIR, 2007 Final SEIR, or the 2014 Subsequent IS/MND regarding the potential for growth-inducing impacts.

Similar to the approved project, the proposed changes to the approved project are consistent with the project and planned growth in the vicinity of the project corridor. The proposed changes would not directly or indirectly induce economic, population, or housing growth in the surrounding environment. As a result, no new significant growth-inducing impacts or increase in the severity of previously identified significant growth-inducing impacts would occur as a result of the proposed changes to the approved project.

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