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5 Other CEQA Required Discussions

This section discusses growth-inducing impacts, irreversible environmental impacts, and significant and unavoidable impacts that would be caused from implementation of the proposed 2022 RTP/SCS.

5.1 Growth-Inducing Impacts

Section 15126.2(e) of the *State CEQA Guidelines* requires a discussion of a project's potential to induce growth. Specifically, an EIR must discuss the ways in which the proposed project could foster economic or population growth. Included in this category are projects that would remove obstacles to population growth. In addition, the EIR must discuss how the project may encourage and/or facilitate other activities that could significantly affect the environment. It cannot be assumed that growth in any area is necessarily beneficial, detrimental, or of little significance to the environment. Economic and population growth does not necessarily create significant and direct physical changes to the environment. However, depending upon the type, magnitude, and location of growth, it can result in significant environmental effects. A project's growth inducing potential is considered significant if growth generated by the project could result in significant effects to one or more environmental issue areas.

5.1.1 Employment, Household, and Population Growth

University of the Pacific Center for Business and Policy Research completed a regional growth forecast for SJCOG in September 2020. The purpose of the regional growth forecast is to provide a consistent economic and population growth forecast to the year 2050 for use in long-range comprehensive planning. The forecast served as an input towards the development of the proposed 2022 RTP/SCS. SJCOG does not hold land use authority and cannot directly affect population growth, as development would be facilitated through implementation of the RTP/SCS, rather than proposing individual growth inducing projects. SJCOG growth forecasts are projections used to plan for public infrastructure, housing, and employment throughout the region. The proposed 2022 RTP/SCS net increase in households and employment opportunities, according to the 2020 regional forecast, is shown in Table 5-1.

Table 5-1 Net Increase in Households and Employment by Jurisdiction

Jurisdiction	2020		2030		2040		2045	
	HH's	Emp.	HH's	Emp	HH's	Emp	HH's	Emp
Escalon	2,664	2,335	2,912	2,616	3,006	2,731	3,046	2,829
Lathrop	6,937	8,881	11,561	11,350	16,098	12,479	18,459	13,388
Lodi	23,543	32,211	26,085	34,979	27,313	36,409	27,881	37,399
Manteca	26,055	21,103	30,899	24,266	34,871	26,273	37,027	27,604
Ripon	5,450	5,224	6,311	5,804	6,909	6,060	7,212	6,257
Stockton	96,474	157,422	105,132	179,253	108,140	187,520	109,358	193,373
Tracy	25,069	31,698	34,722	41,254	36,686	43,533	38,658	45,648
Unincorporated	43,333	71,662	47,752	78,969	47,780	80,862	47,596	82,963
County Total	239,143	330,919	271,810	379,840	292,147	397,902	302,229	411,747
Increase*	-	-	13.7%	14.8%	22.2%	20.2%	26.4%	24.4%

Source: SJCOG 2019 Regional Growth Forecast

HH = Households; Emp. = Employment

*Increase refers to the percent increase from 2020

The land use scenario envisioned by the proposed 2022 RTP/SCS would facilitate the development of infill and TOD projects within existing urbanized areas and therefore redistribute growth patterns. As discussed in Section 4.12, *Land Use and Planning*, and Section 4.17, *Effects Considered Less than Significant*, the proposed 2022 RTP/SCS identifies areas within the region sufficient to house all the forecast population of the region to the plan horizon year as well as identified housing needs under RHNA.

As discussed in Section 4.12, *Land Use and Planning*, the land use scenario envisioned in the proposed 2022 RTP/SCS was developed in close coordination with SJCOG member agency planning staff and also builds on local general plans and general plan updates currently in process or completed. Central to the SCS is a land use plan identifying the general location of uses, residential densities, and building intensities within the region. Starting with land uses allowed by existing adopted local General Plans, the land use plan envisioned by the proposed 2022 RTP/SCS provides for intensification of residential and commercial land uses in urban areas proximate to existing transit, aligning with existing and future transit priority areas (TPAs). The proposed 2022 RTP/SCS accounts for existing county land uses including the significant proportion of its land area that is in agricultural uses. the proposed 2022 RTP/SCS accounts for the land uses of the seven incorporated cities and 15 County rural community plans. The proposed 2022 RTP/SCS is consistent with local agencies' adopted General Plans and relies principally on available land use capacity in these plans. The proposed 2022 RTP/SCS would not require or promote any unplanned growth to meet its goals and is consistent with the RHNA allocation and projected housing needs.

Implementation of the proposed 2022 RTP/SCS would create short-term economic growth in the region as a result of construction-related job opportunities for the construction of transportation and land use projects. Implementation of the proposed 2022 RTP/SCS would also generate additional employment opportunities for roadway, vehicle, and landscape maintenance and transportation facility clean-up. The employment increase may subsequently increase the demand for support services and utilities, which could generate secondary employment opportunities. This additional economic growth would likely raise the existing revenue base within the region. Although

such growth may incrementally increase economic activity in the county, significant physical effects are not likely to result from economic growth generated by the proposed 2022 RTP/SCS.

Furthermore, while development envisioned as part of the proposed 2022 RTP/SCS could result in additional commerce, industry, recreation, public services, and infrastructure throughout the region, this economic activity would be consistent with the regional growth forecast and local general plans. Forecasted growth would be accommodated under the proposed 2022 RTP/SCS; therefore, the Plan would not be growth inducing, but rather it reflects the regulatory mandate to house the forecasted population and be based on the latest planning assumptions.

The proposed 2022 RTP/SCS was developed to integrate forecasted population increases, employment opportunities, and housing needs within the SJCOG area. Therefore, the proposed 2022 RTP/SCS is designed to accommodate growth that would occur with or without its adoption; it is not designed, nor is it anticipated to, induce population growth beyond the levels forecasted.

5.1.2 Removal of Obstacles to Growth

The proposed 2022 RTP/SCS transportation improvement projects are primarily located in existing urbanized areas and transit corridors in the cities of Stockton, San Joaquin, Manteca, Lodi, and Tracy; however, projects are also located in rural or semi-rural areas (ex. bridge replacement/retrofitting or roadside facilities). Such transportation improvements can be perceived as removing an obstacle to growth by either creating additional traffic capacity (in the case of a roadway widening) or providing new or easily facilitated access to undeveloped areas (in the case of a road extension). New infrastructure may also serve to accelerate, or shift planned growth or encourage and intensify unplanned growth. These transportation network improvements would remove obstacles to growth in some areas of the region, which would support additional housing, population and economic growth, and could therefore be considered growth inducing.

The proposed 2022 RTP/SCS transportation improvements are designed to fully support infill development along existing transit corridors seen in High Quality Transit Areas mapping in Appendix W of the SCS, and fully support the complementary transportation needs of the growing population. As a result, the proposed 2022 RTP/SCS would not induce growth beyond that anticipated by 2046; rather, it is intended to accommodate it by encouraging infill and TOD development within existing urban areas. Therefore, the proposed 2022 RTP/SCS is consistent with projected and planned growth. Further, all transportation improvement projects are anticipated by the general plans of the applicable local jurisdictions of the Planning Area, as all improvements have been coordinated with the applicable local jurisdiction.

5.2 Irreversible Effects

Section 15126.2(c) of the *State CEQA Guidelines* requires a discussion of significant irreversible environmental changes that would occur as a result of a proposed project. These may include current or future uses of nonrenewable resources and secondary or growth-inducing impacts that commit future generations to similar uses. CEQA requires that irretrievable commitments of resources be evaluated to ensure that such current consumption is justified.

Although the proposed 2022 RTP/SCS forecasts to a horizon year of 2046, transportation improvement projects would have an indefinite life span, assuming regular maintenance of the proposed improvements and long-term occupancy of infill and TOD projects. The proposed improvements would be located primarily in areas where transportation facilities already exist,

where transportation facilities are already planned, or where transportation facilities are needed to support the new land use patterns identified in the SCS. Therefore, most proposed transportation projects are not generally expected to dramatically alter development patterns in the County and projects would support planned future development patterns. The proposed 2022 RTP/SCS would provide a foundation for local, regional, and State officials in making decisions aimed at achieving a coordinated and balanced transportation system.

Many of the adverse impacts that could occur from implementation of the proposed 2022 RTP/SCS are short-term in nature resulting primarily from construction of the proposed transportation projects, urban infill, and TOD projects along existing corridors. Typical construction-related impacts can involve the following issues: noise, air quality, aesthetics and construction-related erosion and associated water quality impacts. In addition, as discussed in detail Section 4.5, *Energy*, though such materials would not be used in a wasteful manner, all construction activity would involve the use of non-renewable energy sources, potable water and building materials. The use of these resources during construction would increase demand and impact supplies across the SJCOG region.

Long-term irreversible environmental impacts are associated with increased asphalt or concrete paving and related direct and cumulative impacts to geology/soils, biological and cultural resources (historic resources); traffic circulation; and hydrology/water quality, as discussed in their respective sections of this DEIR. In addition, as discussed in Section 4.1, *Aesthetics*, the proposed 2022 RTP/SCS would contribute to an overall increase in the urbanized character of the region. This shift would incrementally increase demand for potable water, electricity and other resources. The supply versus demand for these resources is evaluated by service/utility providers; thus, impacts would be determined during project specific review and as part of the overall planning process addressing regional growth. Although mitigation measures have been prescribed in their respective environmental issue areas to minimize identified significant but mitigable impacts, in certain instances, as discussed in Section 6.3 below, some issues could remain significant with implementation of mitigation measures.

5.3 List of Significant and Unavoidable Impacts

As discussed in Sections 4.1 through 4.16 of the DEIR, implementation of the proposed 2022 RTP/SCS would result in the following significant and unavoidable impacts.

- Impact AES-1: adverse effect on a scenic vista, scenic resources within a state scenic highway
- Impact AES-2: degradation of existing visual character (non-urbanized areas)
- Impact AES-3: generation of new sources of light and glare
- Cumulative – Aesthetics (adverse effect on night sky lighting and changes in the visual environment)
- Impact AQ-2: net increase in criteria pollutants for which the project region is non-attainment under federal or state ambient air quality standards from construction activities
- Impact AQ-3: net increase in criteria pollutants for which the project region is non-attainment under federal or state ambient air quality standards from operational activities
- Impact AQ-5: exposure of sensitive receptors to substantial hazardous air pollutant concentrations
- Cumulative – Air Quality (fugitive dust and ozone precursor emissions during construction and exposure to substantial air pollutant concentrations/odors)

- Impact BIO-3: interference with wildlife movement
- Cumulative – Biological Resources (special-status species and their habitats and wildlife movement)
- Impact CR-1: disturbance of known or unknown historical resources
- Impact CR-2: disturbance of known and unknown archeological resources
- Cumulative – Cultural Resources (historical and archaeological resources)
- Impact GEO-5: disturbance of known and unknown paleontological resources
- Cumulative – Geology and Soils (paleontological resources)
- Impact GHG-1: Construction of the transportation improvements and land use projects envisioned by the proposed 2022 RTP/SCS would generate GHG emissions that may have a significant impact on the environment
- Impact GHG-2: Proposed transportation improvements and land use projects envisioned by the proposed 2022 RTP/SCS would result in a net increase in GHG emissions by 2046 compared to the existing baseline conditions and would therefore have a significant impact on the environment
- Cumulative – Greenhouse Gas Emissions (conflict with applicable plans/policies)
- Impact HYD-2: Decrease groundwater supplies and interfere with groundwater recharge
- Cumulative – Hydrology and Water Quality (groundwater supplies)
- Impact N-1: Temporary increase in ambient noise levels and noise increases related to construction activities
- Impact N-2: Permanent increase in noise levels and noise increase
- Impact N-3: Excessive ground borne vibration levels from construction activities
- Impact N-4: Placement of sensitive receptors in areas with unacceptable noise levels
- Cumulative – Noise (exposure to excessive operational noise)
- Impact T-2: Increase in VMT per capita
- Cumulative – Transportation (increase in VMT)
- Cumulative – Wildfire (direct and indirect exposure to wildfire hazards)

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