

4 Environmental Impact Analysis

This section discusses the possible environmental effects of the proposed project for the specific issue areas that were identified through the scoping process as having the potential to experience significant effects. A “significant effect” under *CEQA Guidelines* §15382, means:

[A] substantial, or potentially substantial, adverse change in any of the physical conditions within the area affected by the project including land, air, water, minerals, flora, fauna, ambient noise, and objects of historic or aesthetic significance. An economic or social change by itself shall not be considered a significant effect on the environment but may be considered in determining whether the physical change is significant.

The analysis of each issue area begins with a discussion of the environmental setting related to the issue, which is followed by the impact analysis. In the impact analysis, the first subsection identifies the methodologies used and the “significance thresholds,” which are those criteria adopted by SJCOG and other agencies, universally recognized, or developed specifically for this analysis to determine whether potential effects are significant. For example, the County of San Joaquin utilizes the *San Joaquin County Environmental Thresholds and Guidelines Manual* (September 2020) for evaluating environmental impacts in the county. The next subsection describes each impact of the proposed project, mitigation measures for significant impacts, and the level of significance after mitigation. Each effect under consideration for an issue area is separately listed in bold text with the discussion of the effect and its significance. Each bolded impact statement also contains a statement of the significance determination for the environmental impact as follows:

- **Significant and Unavoidable.** An impact that cannot be reduced to below the threshold level given reasonably available and feasible mitigation measures. Such an impact requires a Statement of Overriding Considerations to be issued if the project is approved per §15093 of the CEQA Guidelines.
- **Less than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated.** An impact that can be reduced to below the threshold level given reasonably available and feasible mitigation measures. Such an impact requires findings under §15091 of the CEQA Guidelines.
- **Less than Significant.** An impact that may be adverse but does not exceed the threshold levels and does not require mitigation measures. However, mitigation measures that could further lessen the environmental effect may be suggested if readily available and easily achievable.
- **No Impact.** The proposed project would have no effect on environmental conditions or would reduce existing environmental problems or hazards.

Following each environmental impact discussion is a list of mitigation measures and the residual effects or level of significance remaining after implementation of the measure(s). In cases where the mitigation measure for an impact could have a significant environmental impact in another issue area, this impact is discussed and evaluated as a secondary impact. While SJCOG cannot mandate that other agencies implement the mitigation measures, ongoing interagency consultation during project specific environmental review process would ensure that mitigation contained herein is considered and implemented where applicable. Project-specific environmental documents may adjust these mitigation measures as necessary to respond to site-specific conditions. Many sections conclude with a screening-level discussion of specific 2022 RTP/SCS transportation projects that may result in identified impacts. The impact analysis concludes with a discussion of cumulative effects,

which are defined and discussed in detail in Section 3.0, *Environmental Setting and Impact Analysis Approach*.

Regarding Mandatory Findings of Significance under CEQA, Section 4.3, *Biological Resources*, describes the potential effects of the project on plant and animal species populations, habitats, communities, and migratory patterns. Section 4.4, *Cultural Resources*, describes potential effects from 2022 RTP/SCS on important historical and prehistorical cultural resources, and Section 4.15, *Tribal Cultural Resources*, describes potential effects from 2022 RTP/SCS on tribal cultural resources in the SJCOG region. As discussed in these sections, 2022 RTP/SCS would result in significant and unavoidable impacts on biological, cultural, and tribal cultural resources. Potential adverse environmental effects to human beings are discussed in Section 4.2, *Air Quality*, Section 4.12, *Land Use and Planning*, Section 4.13, *Noise*, Section 4.14, *Transportation*, Section 4.16, *Wildfire*, and Section 4.17, *Effects Considered Less than Significant*.

The *Executive Summary*, of this EIR, summarizes all impacts and mitigation measures that apply to the proposed project.