

4 ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING, ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS, AND MITIGATION MEASURES

INTRODUCTION TO ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS

The preparation of this environmental impact report (EIR) is in conformance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) of 1970 and the State CEQA Guidelines. Sections 4.1 through 4.14 contain discussions of the environmental setting, thresholds of significance, environmental impacts, mitigation measures, and levels of significance after mitigation. The issues evaluated in these sections consist of the significant and potentially significant environmental issue areas identified for review in the Notice of Preparation (NOP), found in Appendix A. These sections are organized into the following major components.

EXISTING CONDITIONS

The “Existing Setting” subsection presents the existing regional and local environmental conditions, in accordance with State CEQA Guidelines Section 15125. The subsection describes the baseline conditions against which the environmental impacts associated with the proposed project and the potential future development of the property are assessed. In accordance with CEQA Guidelines Section 15125(a), the environmental baseline, as analyzed in this EIR, is the environmental setting as it existed at the time the NOP was published, November 16, 2006. However, it should be noted that the Interstate 80/Sierra College Boulevard Interchange Improvement Project was initiated following release of the Notice of Preparation and extensive grading and excavation work has been initiated along the western and northern portions of the project site to accommodate the interchange project’s lane construction and soil borrow requirements. These changes have altered the topographic character of the project site’s northern and western boundaries. These changes are discussed in impact sections that follow, when relevant.

In addition, the traffic impact analysis examines the traffic impacts expected to result from the addition of vehicle traffic generated by the proposed project to baseline conditions consisting of existing conditions altered by approved projects. The traffic analysis properly uses the “existing plus approved projects” as the environmental baseline because the new I-80/Sierra College Boulevard interchange will be in place before the proposed project is completed and because the City wants traffic levels to reflect traffic from projects already approved.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

This subsection presents thresholds of significance used in the Draft EIR (DEIR) and discusses significant effects associated with the proposed project on the existing environmental conditions, in accordance with State CEQA Guidelines Sections 15126(a) and 15143. The thresholds of significance are presented at the beginning of each subsection. Project impacts are numbered sequentially by section and impact number throughout these sections. That is, impacts in Section 4.2 are numbered 4.2-1, 4.2-2, 4.2-3; and impacts in Section 4.3 are numbered 4.3-1, 4.3-2, and so on. A bold font impact statement precedes the discussion of each impact and provides a summary of each impact and its level of significance. The discussion that follows the impact statement includes the substantial evidence upon which a conclusion is made as to whether the impact would be significant or less than significant. A discussion of cumulative impacts is provided in Chapter 6, “Cumulative and Growth-Inducing Impacts.”

MITIGATION MEASURES

Following the individual impact discussions, mitigation measures are identified to reduce potentially significant effects associated with the proposed project to the extent feasible, in accordance with State CEQA Guidelines Sections 15002(a)(3), 15021(a)(2), and 15091(a)(1). The mitigation measures are numbered corresponding to the impacts that they address. For example, Mitigation Measure 4.2-1 would mitigate Impact 4.2-1.

LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE AFTER MITIGATION

Following the individual mitigation measures, a conclusion is provided regarding whether mitigation measures would or would not reduce an impact to a less-than-significant level. The conclusion is presented in accordance with State CEQA Guidelines Section 15126(b), which requires identification of significant and unavoidable impacts. Significant and unavoidable impacts are also summarized in Chapter 2, “Executive Summary,” of this document.