
4.0 OTHER SECTIONS REQUIRED BY CEQA

This section discusses additional topics statutorily required by the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), specifically growth-inducing impacts, significant irreversible environmental changes/irretrievable commitment of resources, and significant and unavoidable environmental impacts.

4.1 GROWTH-INDUCING IMPACTS

INTRODUCTION

CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.2(d) requires that an environmental impact report (EIR) evaluate the growth-inducing impacts of a proposed action. A growth-inducing impact is defined in CEQA Guidelines Section 15126(d) as:

the way[] in which [a] proposed project could foster economic or population growth, or the construction of additional housing, either directly or indirectly, in the surrounding environment. Included in this are projects which would remove obstacles to population growth...

Section 15126.2 cautions that "it must not be assumed that growth in any area is necessarily beneficial, detrimental, or of little significance to the environment."

A project can have direct and/or indirect growth inducement potential. Direct growth inducement would result if a project, for example, involved construction of new housing. A project would have indirect growth inducement potential if it established substantial new permanent employment opportunities (e.g., through commercial, industrial, or governmental enterprises) or if it would involve a construction effort with substantial short-term employment opportunities that would indirectly stimulate the need for additional housing and services to support the new employment demand. Similarly, a project would indirectly induce growth if it would remove an obstacle to additional growth and development, such as removing a constraint on a required public service. A project providing an increased water supply in an area where water service historically limited growth could be considered growth inducing.

The State CEQA Guidelines further explain that the environmental effects of induced growth are considered indirect impacts of the proposed action. These indirect impacts or secondary effects of growth may result in significant, adverse environmental impacts. Potential secondary effects of growth include increased demand on other community and public services and infrastructure, increased traffic and noise, and adverse environmental impacts such as degradation of air and water quality, degradation or loss of plant and animal habitat, and conversion of agricultural and open space land to developed uses.

Growth inducement may constitute an adverse impact if the growth is not consistent with or accommodated by the land use plans and growth management plans and policies for the area affected. Local land use plans provide for land use development patterns and growth policies that allow for the orderly expansion of urban development supported by adequate urban public services, such as water supply, roadway infrastructure, sewer service, and solid waste service.

GROWTH EFFECTS OF THE PROJECT

The proposed project would result in development of a pathway and would not result in construction of new housing, roadways, or other infrastructure that would have the potential for inducing growth in the area. Nor would the proposed project remove an existing constraint that

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would allow additional growth and development. A pathway, unlike a roadway that carries motor vehicles, does not provide the necessary infrastructure for increased access into otherwise undeveloped areas of the county. Public access will be improved to previously inaccessible areas along a narrow right-of-way; however, this access by cyclists and pedestrians has no potential to induce or remove barriers to growth. For these reasons, the proposed project would have no potential to directly or indirectly induce growth. The specific environmental effects resulting from the proposed project are discussed in the environmental issue areas in Sections 2.1 through 2.5.

4.2 IRREVERSIBLE ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS

Public Resources Code Sections 21100(b)(2) and 21100.1(a) require that EIRs prepared for the adoption of a plan, policy, or ordinance of a public agency must include a discussion of significant irreversible environmental changes of project implementation. CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.2(c) describes irreversible environmental changes as:

Uses of nonrenewable resources during the initial and continued phases of the project may be irreversible since a large commitment of such resources makes removal or nonuse thereafter unlikely. Primary impacts and, particularly, secondary impacts (such as highway improvement which provides access to a previously inaccessible area) generally commit future generations to similar uses. In addition, irreversible damage can result from environmental accidents associated with the project. Irrecoverable commitments of resources should be evaluated to assure that such current consumption is justified.

Implementation of the proposed project would provide public access to previously undisturbed areas of the San Luis Obispo Creek (SLO Creek) corridor. Construction of the project will require limited amounts of renewable and nonrenewable resources (paving materials, gravel, lumber, steel, etc.) but not in quantities or levels of commitment that would be considered significant or impact the availability of other similar resources. Similarly, secondary impacts such as the long-term commitment of land area for the pathway will not be significant, because the pathway is consistent and compatible with its surroundings. The physical construction of the pathway as a facility represents a relatively minor commitment of land use. The footprint of the pathway will include physical improvements, but not necessarily a multigenerational commitment (such as a subdivision, roadway, or occupied building). Although the introduction of pathway users could potentially lead to the disturbance of wildlife and natural resources within the corridor, the amount of disturbance would be extremely limited due to the nature of the pathway. Noise generated by users would be limited during daytime hours, and existing agriculture operations and highway noise currently generate more noise compared to pedestrians and cyclists on the pathway. In addition, because the pathway is intended for walking and riding bicycles, users are more likely to enjoy the visual qualities of their surroundings than to deviate from their designated path to disturb natural areas. The project includes fencing and mitigation to reduce the potential for trespassing and to inform users about the sensitive habitat. For all of these reasons, the proposed project is not anticipated to have significant irreversible environmental changes.

4.3 SIGNIFICANT AND UNAVOIDABLE ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS

State CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.2(b) requires an EIR to discuss unavoidable significant environmental effects, including those that can be mitigated, but not to a level of insignificance. Section 15093(a) of the CEQA Guidelines allows the decision-making agency, in approving a project, to determine that the benefits of a proposed project outweigh the unavoidable adverse environmental impacts of implementing the project. The County can approve a project

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with unavoidable significant adverse impacts if it prepares a Statement of Overriding Considerations setting forth the specific reasons for making such a judgment and makes other findings as required by CEQA Guidelines Section 15091.

The proposed project will result in no significant and unavoidable impacts. The reader is referred to the various environmental issue areas of Sections 2.1 through 2.6 of this DEIR for further details and analysis of environmental impacts. Based on the significance criteria set forth by CEQA, the project will not result in any significant and unavoidable impacts.

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