

3.16 IRREVERSIBLE AND IRRETRIEVABLE COMMITMENTS

The purpose of this section is to identify irreversible and irretrievable commitments of environmental resources required to implement the project.

Construction and operation of the project would involve certain commitments of resources. In some instances, the resource committed would be recovered after a short period of time. However, resources would often be irreversibly or irretrievably committed to the project because they would be permanently consumed or they would be dedicated to a particular use for an essentially limitless period of time.

The project would involve the commitment of a range of natural, physical, human, and fiscal resources. For example, the land used for the rail line and stations would continue the existing commitment of land in the area for transportation purposes. To the extent that this would be for long-term use, it would be an irretrievable commitment. However, in the event that a greater need for the land would arise in the future, or that the corridor would no longer be needed, the land could be converted to some other use. Currently, there is no reason to expect that a need for such conversion would ever be necessary or desirable.

The project would also require various other resources to be irreversibly or irretrievably committed. Non-renewable fossil fuel resources would be necessary to power construction equipment, electrical devices, vehicles, and buses. Considerable amounts of other types of resources would also be expended, including iron, steel, wood, sand, stone, aggregate, and cement construction materials. Additionally, large amounts of labor and natural resources would be committed to fabricate and prepare the construction materials. This commitment of resources would be considered irreversible, except for the possible recycling of raw materials in the unlikely event that the corridor would be dismantled. However, these resources are generally not in short supply, and their use for the project would not have an adverse effect on their continued availability. Given the commitment of these resources well into the foreseeable future, however, their use should be considered irreversible and irretrievable.

A substantial one-time expenditure of financial resources would also be necessary to construct the project. This expense would be offset by the direct and indirect benefits to the local and regional economy from new construction employment, purchases of construction materials and services, and long-term economic development opportunities resulting from an enhanced transportation system.

The commitment of resources to construct and operate the project would be offset by the extent to which residents, employees, and visitors would benefit from the improved efficiency, accessibility, safety, and environmental quality of the transportation system in Southern California. These benefits are anticipated to substantially outweigh any irreversible or irretrievable commitments of resources.

