

# Chapter 6. Other Impact Considerations

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## 6.1 Determining Significance under the California Environmental Quality Act

This chapter provides the basis for describing any environmental effects identified in Chapter 4 that would be considered significant under the California Environmental Quality Act (also known as CEQA). Determining and documenting whether a project may have a significant effect on the environment plays a critical role in the California Environmental Quality Act process. The California Environmental Quality Act requires that lead agencies know what constitutes a significant effect on the environment and whether mitigation measures are available to reduce a significant effect to a less-than-significant level. It also requires mitigation of all significant impacts on the environment to the extent feasible.

The project is subject to state environmental review requirements. Therefore, project documentation has been prepared in compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act. Metro Gold Line Foothill Extension Construction Authority (Authority) is the Project proponent and the lead agency under the California Environmental Quality Act.

The California Environmental Quality Act requires Construction Authority to identify each “significant effect on the environment” resulting from the refinements and ways to mitigate each significant effect. If the Project refinements may have a significant effect on any environmental resource, then an Environmental Impact Report must be prepared. Each significant effect on the environment must be disclosed in the Environmental Impact Report and mitigated if feasible. In addition, the California Environmental Quality Act Guidelines list a number of mandatory findings of significance, which also require the preparation of an Environmental Impact Report. This chapter discusses the effects of this project and California Environmental Quality Act significance.

## 6.2 Cumulative Impacts

Construction and operation of the proposed Project refinements would involve the direct and indirect effects of the proposed Project as well as the cumulative effects of the proposed Project combined with other related past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions.

For purposes of analyzing the potential cumulative effects of the proposed Project refinements, the definitions of “cumulative impact” under CEQA have been followed. The CEQA Guidelines (14 Cal. Code of Regs. sec. 15355) define cumulative impacts as:

*“ . . . two or more individual effects which, when considered together, are considerable or which compound or increase other environmental impacts. (a) The individual effects may be changes resulting from a single project or a number of separate projects. (b) The cumulative impact from several projects is the change in the environment which results from the incremental impact of the project when added to other closely related past, present, and reasonably foreseeable*



*probable future projects. Cumulative impacts can result from individually minor but collectively significant projects taking place over a period of time.”*

Based on the CEQA Guidelines discussion of cumulative effects, the following principles can be applied to the assessment of cumulative effects of the proposed Project refinements:

- Cumulative effects typically are caused by the aggregate effects of past, present, and reasonably foreseeable actions. These are the effects (past, present, and future) of the proposed action on a given resource and the effects (past, present, and future), if any, caused by all other related actions that affect the same resource.
- When other related actions are likely to affect a resource that is also affected by the proposed action, it does not matter who (public or private entity) has taken the related action(s).
- The scope of cumulative effects analyses can usually be limited to reasonable geographic boundaries and time periods. These boundaries should extend only so far as the point at which a resource is no longer substantially affected or where the effects are so speculative as to no longer be truly meaningful.
- Cumulative effects can include the effects (past, present, and future) on a given resource caused by similar types of actions (e.g., air emissions from several individual highway projects) and/or the effects (past, present, and future) on a given resource caused by different types of actions (e.g., air emissions from a highway project, a solid waste incinerator, and a mining facility).

An adequate discussion of cumulative impacts requires analyzing either (A) “a list of past, present, and probable future projects producing related or cumulative impacts, including, if necessary, those projects outside the control of the agency,” or (B) “a summary of projections contained in an adopted general plan or related planning document, or in a prior environmental document which has been adopted or certified, which described or evaluated regional or area wide conditions contributing the cumulative impact.” [CEQA Guidelines Section 15130(b)(1)].

As with the 2007 Final EIR this cumulative impact analysis relies on method “B” described above. The analysis is based on a summary of projections contained in an adopted regional planning document, the Southern California Association of Governments’ (SCAG) 2008 Regional Transportation Plan (RTP). SCAG encourages lead agencies to use the region-wide analysis contained in the RTP Final Program EIR as the basis for cumulative analyses. The 2008 RTP Final Program EIR (2008 RTP Final EIR) (SCH No. 2007061126) is therefore incorporated by reference into this Supplemental EIR per Section 15150 of the CEQA Guidelines and is used as the basis for cumulative analyses. The 2008 RTP Final Program EIR may be viewed on SCAG’s website (<http://www.scag.ca.gov/RTPpeir2008/final/addendum.htm>), or by contacting the agency directly.

The 2008 RTP is a regional planning document that establishes goals, objectives, policies, and implementation priorities for the region’s transportation infrastructure through the year 2035. The 2008 RTP may be thought of as a blueprint for comprehensive transportation planning that focuses on linkages between employment and housing centers and favors land use patterns that emphasize



density and reuse of land. One specific component of the RTP is the “Public Transportation System” element which seeks to “ensure mobility for people without access to automobiles and to provide attractive alternatives for drive-alone motorists or discretionary riders.” In order to achieve this goal, the RTP calls for an expanded system of integrated bus service and rail transit, where existing and proposed rail stations serve as hubs for bus travel to surrounding areas.

The 2008 RTP Final EIR analyzes potential environmental impacts from implementation of transportation projects throughout a six-county region encompassing approximately 38,000 square miles through the year 2035. Because the Gold Line Foothill Extension is considered within the 2008 RTP Final EIR analysis and both the 2008 RTP Final EIR and this Draft Supplemental EIR to the 2007 Final EIR share a common horizon date of analysis, the 2008 RTP Final EIR and its adopted findings are the most appropriate source for identifying cumulative impacts related to the Gold Line Foothill Extension Phase 2A Project (Project) refinements.

Furthermore, the Authority strives for the M&O Facility in Monrovia to be designed and constructed to meet Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED<sup>®</sup>) Silver Certification. The LEED<sup>®</sup> certification program encourages and accelerates global adoption of sustainable “green” buildings and development practices, recognizing projects that implement strategies for better environmental and health performance. As such, these facilities will be constructed to minimize environmental impacts.

The impact discussions below consider the cumulative effects of implementation of the proposed Project refinements within the framework of the cumulative regional transportation analysis contained in SCAG’s 2008 RTP Final EIR.

## 6.2.1 Cumulative Impacts

### 6.2.1.1 Aesthetics

The 2008 RTP Final EIR concludes that implementation of the RTP could result in obstructed views of scenic resources, which would constitute a significant cumulative impact. New design elements associated with the proposed Project refinements, such as safety fencing, catenaries, traction power substations, and passenger platforms, will be constructed at one time taking into account the local design setting, as well as municipal design standards. The Project’s impacts to visual resources result almost entirely from the removal of screening landscaping. Visual changes to the environment resulting from the proposed Project refinements would be mitigated to a less than significant level and would not fall outside the scope of the regional cumulative impacts identified by SCAG in the 2008 RTP Final EIR. Therefore, the proposed Project refinements would not result in cumulative impacts related to aesthetics.

### 6.2.1.2 Land Use

The proposed Project refinements to the 2007 Final EIR, along with other transportation improvements considered within the framework of SCAG’s 2008 RTP Final EIR, would contribute to the overall intensity of development within SCAG’s region. The 2008 RTP contains growth management goals to attain mobility and to develop urban forms that enhance quality of life, accommodate a diversity of lifestyles, preserve open space and natural resources, are aesthetically



pleasing and preserve the character of communities, and enhance the regional strategic goal of maintaining the regional quality of life. Given that the proposed Project refinements would help achieve SCAG's long-term growth management, land use, and mobility goals, it would contribute to a beneficial cumulative impact relative to land use.

### 6.2.1.3 Population and Housing (Socioeconomics)

Cumulative impacts would be likely to arise from the combination of additional transit ridership and redevelopment around LRT stations, which could include changes in land use. In general, land use changes in station areas associated with LRT service have already been accounted for by individual cities' planning efforts. This planning typically calls for increased residential densities or commercial activity within walking distances of stations. These increases in density or activity would be consistent with the overall socioeconomic profile and land use plans of the individual cities. No substantive changes would occur as the result of the proposed Project refinements. Therefore, the proposed Project refinements would not result in cumulative impacts relative to population and housing.

### 6.2.1.4 Transportation and Traffic

SCAG's analysis of transportation and traffic impacts in the 2008 RTP Final EIR concludes that cumulative traffic and transportation impacts will be significant due to the regional increase in vehicle miles traveled (VMT). Methodology for the traffic analysis of the proposed Project refinements to the 2007 Final EIR included using the SCAG travel demand forecasting model and, as demonstrated in Chapter 4 of this draft SEIR, the proposed Project refinements would result in a decrease in VMT when compared to the No-Build Alternative in the year 2035. Thus, the proposed Project refinements would not contribute to the significant cumulative impacts relative to transportation and traffic identified by SCAG in the 2008 RTP Final EIR.

### 6.2.1.5 Cultural Resources

SCAG's analysis of the 2008 RTP concludes that a significant cumulative impact to cultural resources would occur due to a substantial increase in urbanization in the SCAG region by 2035. Impacts to cultural resources resulting from the proposed Project refinements, although mitigated to less than significant levels, could contribute to the adverse cumulative impacts detailed in the 2008 RTP Final EIR. However, the impact contribution from the refinements would not be cumulatively considerable, since it is not significant on a Project level.

### 6.2.1.6 Hazards and Hazardous Materials

As detailed in Chapter 4, several potentially hazardous materials were identified within the Project study area, primarily within the existing railroad right-of-way. Potential impacts associated with disturbance of hazardous materials during construction of the proposed Project refinements would be eliminated or reduced to less than significant levels by complying with the federal and state regulatory requirements and/or permits. With the implementation of mitigation measures identified, the presence and potential disturbance of such materials would not contribute to a significant/adverse cumulative impact.

SCAG's 2008 RTP Final EIR concludes that the regional transportation system in 2035 would pose potential for hazards to the public or the environment through reasonably foreseeable upset and



accident conditions involving the release of hazardous materials into the environment during transportation. Implementation of the proposed Project refinements could contribute to this adverse cumulative impact.

#### **6.2.1.7 Public Services and Facilities**

The Los Angeles County Metro Transit Authority (LACMTA) would patrol Project facilities. The respective cities' police departments and the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department (LACSD) would provide additional services when needed and requested by LACMTA. Because LACMTA maintains its own security personnel and programs, the proposed Project refinements are not expected to contribute to cumulative impacts to police services or cumulative increases in demand for police services. The proposed Project refinements would not increase demand for fire protection services because such demand is primarily attributable to increased commercial and residential development rather than transit projects. Therefore, the proposed Project refinements to the 2007 Final EIR would not contribute to cumulative impacts related to public services.

#### **6.2.1.8 Utilities/Service Systems**

Cumulative impacts to utilities could arise from the ongoing growth of the region, as characterized in SCAG's 2008 RTP Final EIR. The proposed Project refinements are accounted for in SCAG's forecasts of regional growth. Future transportation projects may influence the location of development or redevelopment, but they are not likely to induce additional, unaccounted-for utility demands. Temporary, short-term service disruptions could occur during construction of the Project refinements, but would not be considered significant with respect to regional cumulative impacts.

#### **6.2.1.9 Air Quality and Greenhouse Gas Emissions**

The proposed Project refinements would contribute to an increase in transit ridership and corresponding decrease in VMT and reduction in vehicle pollutant emissions. Projected future emission rates from the California Air Resources Board (CARB) and future traffic levels based on the SCAG travel demand forecasting model were used in the air quality analysis for the proposed Project refinements. Consistent with the findings of SCAG's 2008 RTP Final EIR air quality analysis, net cumulative beneficial effects to regional air quality are expected as a result of the Project. The proposed Project refinements, along with other transportation improvements considered in the RTP, would result in a beneficial cumulative effect in reducing criteria pollutant emissions and implementation of the South Coast Air Quality Management District's (SCAQMD) Air Quality Management Plan.

#### **6.2.1.10 Geology Soils**

The 2008 RTP Final EIR concludes that significant cumulative impacts could occur due to hazardous geologic conditions in certain locations where transportation projects are planned. However, the proposed Project refinements are not expected to result in any significant/adverse geologic or seismic hazards and thus would not contribute to cumulative impacts relative to geology and soils, as identified by SCAG.

#### **6.2.1.11 Hydrology and Water Quality**

SCAG's analysis of the 2008 RTP concludes that significant cumulative impacts to water quality would result due to potential for increased vehicle pollutants to migrate to surface and groundwater



supplies. The proposed Project refinements would result in a beneficial cumulative impact relative to hydrology and water quality, due to the reduction in VMT, which will be realized with implementation of the Project. In addition, the proposed M&O Facility in Monrovia contains primarily impervious surfaces as compared to the M&O Facility in Irwindale, which was analyzed in the 2007 Final EIR. As such, the proposed Project refinements would not result in cumulative impacts relative to hydrology and water quality.

#### **6.2.1.12 Noise**

SCAG's 2008 RTP analysis indicates that significant/adverse cumulative ambient noise increases could occur. Noise level increases resulting from the proposed Project refinements, while mitigated, would fall within the context of the cumulative noise increase indicated in the 2008 RTP Final EIR. Based on the levels of information available when the SEIR was prepared, the Mountain Avenue Realignment refinement would result in "normally unacceptable" noise impacts. However, due to the minimal increase in noise, this impact is deemed less than significant. While the proposed Project refinements could result in remainder vibration impacts, such impacts would be highly localized and would neither contribute to a cumulative impact nor be compounded by vibration from other regional transportation projects within the RTP framework.

#### **6.2.1.13 Recreation Facilities and Parks**

The proposed Project refinements would not increase cumulative demand for parks, and thus, would not contribute to cumulative impacts on recreation.

#### **6.2.1.14 Biology**

The majority of the Project study area occurs in already developed urban areas. The habitat that would have been lost in the City of Irwindale from the M&O Facility identified in the 2007 Final EIR would not be lost due to the Monrovia M&O Facility taking its place. Additionally, the San Gabriel River wildlife movement corridor would not be adversely affected by the proposed Project refinements. SCAG's 2008 RTP Final EIR indicates that cumulative impacts to biological resources could result due to construction in undeveloped areas and population growth and development on existing natural lands. As discussed in the Supplemental EIR, the proposed Project refinements would reduce the impacts to habitat as compared to the 2007 Final EIR. As such, the proposed Project refinements would not result in cumulative impacts relative to biological resources.

### **6.3 Discussion of Significant Impacts**

#### **6.3.1 Less than Significant Effects of the Proposed Project**

The less-than-significant effects of the proposed Project are on land use, population and housing, and public services and facilities. No mitigation measures are required. Please see the respective sections in Chapter 4 for the full discussion of these effects.

#### **6.3.2 Significant Environmental Effects of the Proposed Project**

The potentially significant environmental effects of the proposed Project are: aesthetics, transportation and traffic, cultural, hazardous materials, utilities/service systems, air quality, geology and soils, hydrology and water quality, recreation, and biology. These effects can be reduced to less



than significant levels with the implementation of the mitigation measures identified with each effect. Please see the respective sections in Chapter 4 for the full discussion of these effects and mitigation measures.

### **6.3.3 Unavoidable Significant Environmental Effects**

Because of the design limitations at Mountain Avenue and Duarte Road, sound walls would not be feasible. As such, operational traffic noise impacts would be significant. Therefore, the impact from project-related traffic noise is considered significant and unavoidable. Please see Chapter 4.12 for the full discussion of noise impacts and mitigation measures.



