



Chapter 4

Environmental Analysis, Consequences, and Mitigation

Section 4.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the existing conditions, environmental impacts, mitigation measures, and impacts after mitigation for each of the alternatives for the Eastside Transit Corridor Phase 2 Project. The analysis is based on federal and state requirements and guidelines. The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) require the evaluation of potential effects of proposed government actions on the environment. Each significant impact on the environment must be disclosed in the CEQA EIR process and must be mitigated, if feasible. NEPA refers to adverse effects and requires this same evaluation process. Since this is a joint NEPA EIS/CEQA EIR, each section in this chapter concludes with both a NEPA finding and a CEQA determination. When discussing NEPA findings, the terminology used in this analysis includes “no adverse effect” and “adverse effect.” When discussing CEQA determinations, the terminology used in this analysis includes “no impact,” “less than significant impact,” and “significant impact.”

NEPA requires federal agencies to prepare an EIS for any proposed action “significantly affecting the quality of the human environment.” According to 40 CFR 1508.27, the term “significantly” is based on the criteria of context and intensity. Consideration of context means that the significance of an action must be analyzed in several contexts such as society as a whole (human and national), the affected region, the affected interests, and the locality. Intensity refers to the severity of an impact.

There are instances when an impact can be adverse under NEPA but not significant under CEQA if CEQA thresholds are not exceeded. The converse can also be true: impacts can be significant under CEQA but not considered adverse under NEPA.

For a majority of the environmental disciplines, project alternatives are compared with existing conditions in this chapter. However Section 4.7, Air Quality, Section 4.8, Climate Change, and Section 4.13, Energy Resources, use the year 2035 as a future baseline for determining environmental impacts. For these disciplines, the comparison of the project with the existing conditions (2010), as upheld by the Sunnyvale CEQA decision (*Sunnyvale West Neighborhood Assoc. v. City of Sunnyvale*, 190 Cal. App. 4th 1351 [2010]), is provided under the “Comparison of Alternatives against Existing Conditions” subsection. The determination of significant impacts based on a comparison with the existing conditions (2010) for these disciplines is discussed in more detail in Appendix GG, Existing Plus Project Conditions.

This chapter focuses on the short-term, temporary construction impacts and long-term, permanent operational impacts associated with the project alternatives. Cumulative impact discussions are provided in Section 4.19, Cumulative Impacts. Construction impacts are discussed in more detail in Appendix EE, Construction Impacts Technical Memorandum, and cumulative impacts are discussed in more detail in Appendix FF, Cumulative Impacts Technical Memorandum, of this Draft EIS/EIR.

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