

CHAPTER 1 - INTRODUCTION

PURPOSE OF THIS FINAL EIR

This document has been prepared to respond to comments on the Draft Environmental Impact Report (Draft EIR – State Clearinghouse No. 2014062060) prepared for the Draft 2016 Metropolitan Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategy (Draft MTP/SCS). Pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), the Draft EIR analyzes the potential adverse environmental impacts associated with implementation of the Draft MTP/SCS and recommends mitigation measures to reduce potentially significant impacts. SACOG updates the MTP/SCS every four years, or more frequently, in order to plan for the long-range transportation needs of the region and ensure that the region remains eligible to receive federal and state transportation dollars for public transit, street/road, bicycle and pedestrian improvements. This FEIR contains all comments received during the public review period on the Draft EIR for the Draft MTP/SCS, provides responses to comments on the Draft EIR, and identifies revisions to the Draft EIR, as necessary, in response to comments or to amplify and clarify material in the Draft EIR. These changes do not alter the conclusions of the Draft EIR.

Although CEQA requires responses only for “significant environmental issues” raised in comments, SACOG has provided responses for all comments received on the Draft MTP/SCS and the Draft EIR. This is not intended to expand SACOG’s legal obligations under CEQA, but rather to maximize opportunities for sharing information and increasing public understanding regarding the MTP/SCS and related review process.

This Final EIR has been prepared by SACOG pursuant to CEQA and the State CEQA Guidelines (14 California Code of Regulations [CCR] 15000 et seq.), and together with the Draft EIR, constitutes the EIR for the proposed project.

SUMMARY OF THE PROPOSED PROJECT

The plan area for the proposed MTP/SCS includes the counties of El Dorado, Placer, Sacramento, Sutter, Yolo and Yuba counties, exclusive of the Tahoe Basin. The plan area encompasses 3,863,323 acres (6,036 square miles) and contains 718,356 acres of developed land (as of 2012). To accommodate a projected increase of approximately 811,000 people, 285,000 new housing units and 439,000 new employees in the region through the year 2036, the proposed MTP/SCS projects the development of an additional 47,563 acres of land.

The proposed MTP/SCS includes a set of capital and operational improvements to the regional transportation system including road, bicycle, pedestrian, and transit projects. The plan also includes maintenance and rehabilitation activities to preserve the existing and expanded transportation system through 2036. Funding to support the transportation investments in the proposed MTP/SCS comes from a number of federal, state and local sources, each with specific purposes and restrictions. In total, SACOG forecasts \$35 billion in revenues (\$49.8 billion escalated) over the planning period. The transportation projects contained in the proposed MTP/SCS are matched to the available revenues for the planning period.

The project requires a conformity determination under the federal Clean Air Act section 176(c), to be made by the Federal Highway Administration and the Federal Transit Administration. This conformity determination requires a consultation process involving the Metropolitan Planning Organization (SACOG is the MPO for the Sacramento region), state and local air quality planning agencies, state and local transportation agencies, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, and the U.S. Department of Transportation. Other public agencies may use this EIR in their decision-making regarding future land use and transportation projects, as described in Chapter 2, Project Description, of the Draft EIR. These agencies include local governments within the plan area, state agencies, regional transportation planning agencies within the plan area, public transit providers, air districts, Native American tribes, colleges and university transportation providers and transportation management associations, among others.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW PROCESS

SACOG used several methods to solicit public input on the project and environmental analysis. These methods included the distribution of a Notice of Preparation on July 18, 2014; a scoping meeting on July 23, 2014; filing of a Notice of Completion (NOC) and copies of the Draft EIR with the State Clearinghouse on September 17, 2015; circulation of a Notice of Availability (NOA) of the Draft EIR on September 18, 2015; distribution of the Draft EIR for a comment period of September 18, 2015 through November 16, 2015; four public hearings to receive both oral and written comments on the Draft EIR (October 29, 2015 at the Folsom Community Center, November 4, 2015 at the Lincoln City Council Chamber, November 5, 2015 at the Yolo County Board Chambers, and November 10, 2015 at the SACOG offices); and a release of this FEIR, including circulation of an NOA and filing of an NOC and copies of the Draft EIR with the State Clearinghouse, on January 20, 2016 to be followed by subsequent project meetings and hearings as described in the NOA.

The Draft EIR was distributed to various public agencies, responsible agencies and interested organizations and individuals. Copies of the document were made available at the SACOG office and at all of the public county libraries in the six-county SACOG region. The public was notified of the availability of the Draft EIR through SACOG's website (www.sacog.org). Electronic copies of the documents were also made available on SACOG's website. The report was made available for public review and comment for a total 60-day period. The agency review period established by the State Clearinghouse commenced on September 18, 2015 and expired on November 16, 2015.

CONTENTS OF THIS FINAL EIR

CEQA requires that a Final EIR consist of revisions to the Draft EIR; comments and recommendations received on the Draft EIR; a list of persons, organizations, and public agencies commenting on the Draft EIR; and the responses of the lead agency to significant environmental points raised in the review and consultation process. The content and format of this Final EIR were developed to meet the requirements of CEQA and the State CEQA Guidelines.

This Final EIR meets the requirements of CEQA and the State CEQA Guidelines as follows:

- Chapter 1, “Introduction,” provides a summary of the proposed project and gives an overview of the EIR process.
- Chapter 2, “List of Commenters,” includes a list of all commenters who submitted written or oral comments during the review period.
- Chapter 3, “Comments and Responses on the Draft EIR,” explains the method used to respond to comments, includes written and oral comments of all agencies, organizations, and individuals commenting on the Draft EIR, and provides responses to all comments received.
- Chapter 4, “Revisions to the Draft EIR,” includes excerpts from the Draft EIR showing revisions or changes to the original document text.
- Chapter 5, “List of Preparers,” lists the people responsible for preparing this Final EIR.

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