



Land Use & Natural Resources Committee

Item #16-6-8
Information

May 26, 2016

Senate Bill 743 Update

Issue: What is happening regarding the recently published SB 743 proposed guidelines and technical advisory?

Recommendation: None, this is for information and discussion only.

Discussion: Senate Bill (SB) 743 is the state law mandating a change in the way that public agencies evaluate transportation impacts under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). Historically, the major focus of CEQA transportation impacts is “level of service” (LOS), which is a measure of peak roadway congestion and delay.

On January 20, 2016 the Office of Planning and Research (OPR) published proposed guidelines which would require that project generation of vehicle miles traveled (VMT) replace LOS as the main measure of transportation impacts of projects, for both land development projects and transportation projects. Further, the OPR proposal:

- Allows for a period of two years after adoption of guidelines before agencies are required to implement the new CEQA procedures.
- Includes an extensive “technical advisory” showing examples of analysis techniques, impact definitions, and thresholds of significance for various types of projects.

SB 743 was discussed at the February 11 Regional Managers’ Forum. Several concerns were expressed by members. All agencies were concerned that SB743 would require new, potentially-costly analysis, since LOS is unlikely to be replaced as a measure of local concern. Additionally member agencies with ongoing general plan updates were concerned that they would “miss the boat” on including SB 743-consistent impacts and thresholds. It was agreed that follow-up discussions would be held with SACOG and interested member agency staff to identify opportunities for collaboration on SB 743.

At the statewide level, the OPR proposal has stimulated an active debate. The most active debate focuses on the technical advisory, and its presentation of analysis techniques and thresholds of significance for the impacts of transportation projects. The proposal outlines approaches for evaluating VMT impacts of projects, including “induced demand,” and thresholds of significance, which many MPOs and other organizations feel will make CEQA clearance of roadway capacity project more difficult.

SACOG staff activities on this issue include:

- Meetings with OPR staff to propose development of “test cases” of SB 743 analysis, to better assess the difficulty (and potential cost) of implementing the proposed guidance, and to identify opportunities to streamline the implementation of the guidance.
- Ongoing communications with other MPOs and organizations in the state to identify areas of mutual concern, and to develop approaches to modify the guidance or technical advisory to address the concerns.
- Communications with member agencies with ongoing planning projects and concerns on SB 743 implementation, prior to final guidance being published.

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