

CHAPTER 21 – GROWTH RELATED IMPACTS

INTRODUCTION

This chapter discusses whether the proposed MTP 2035 project could generate population and employment growth beyond levels currently anticipated in regional and local plans. It describes the projected population and employment growth for the MTP Plan Area between now and 2035 and the location of the projected growth within the region. SACOG has no land use authority and cannot directly affect the pattern that future growth will take. Subsequent project level environmental reviews will analyze the potential growth related impacts of individual MTP projects.

CEQA REQUIREMENTS

Section 15126.2(d) of the State CEQA Guidelines provides guidance for analyzing the growth-related impacts of a project. Growth can be induced in several ways, including the elimination of obstacles to growth or stimulation of economic activity within a region. Based on the standards of significance contained in Section 15126.2(d) a project is considered to be directly or indirectly growth-inducing if it:

- fosters economic or population growth, or the construction of additional housing in the surrounding environment; or
- removes obstacles to growth (e.g., through development of physical infrastructure, roadways, and utilities)
- encourage and facilitate other activities that could significantly affect the environment, either individually or cumulatively.

PROJECTED POPULATION, EMPLOYMENT AND HOUSING GROWTH IN THE MTP PLAN AREA

Growth rates and patterns within an area are influenced by various local, regional, and nationwide forces that reflect ongoing social, economic, and technological changes. Ultimately, the amount and location of population growth and economic development that occurs within a specific area is regulated by city and county governments through zoning, land use plans and policies, and decisions regarding development applications. Local government and other regional, state, and federal agencies also make decisions regarding the provision of infrastructure (e.g., transportation facilities, water facilities, sewage facilities) that may influence growth rates and the location of future development.

The 28 jurisdictions in the Sacramento Region are at various stages of updating or augmenting their local land use plans, as discussed in Chapter 13, *Land Use and Planning*. Since the adoption of the Blueprint Vision by the SACOG Board of Directors in December 2004, a number of jurisdictions in the region have begun implementing the Blueprint smart growth principles into their planning processes. While SACOG does not have the ultimate ability to determine where growth will occur because it does not have land use authority, for the MTP 2035, SACOG worked with each of the local jurisdictions to develop a growth forecast and accompanying land use allocation that reflects each of their Blueprint implementation efforts. The MTP 2035 land use assumptions, therefore, are based on the Blueprint principles. The general plan and specific plan development activities occurring in the region by the local jurisdictions are reflected in the 2035 land use assumptions that accompany the population, housing and employment forecasts for the MTP 2035.

In contrast to the growth projections used for the 2006 MTP, the adopted land use and accompanying population and employment projections for the MTP 2035 show considerable changes from the traditional approach to development. With the smart growth principles now incorporated, the focus of regional and local land use planning has shifted to more compact development with higher employment and housing densities. More of the projected growth occurs in the central core and inner suburbs, which is generally consistent with the Blueprint principles. Most outlying communities that were previously anticipating faster growth are now projecting somewhat slower rates of growth.

ANALYSIS OF GROWTH RELATED IMPACTS

Economic or population growth

As discussed in Chapter 15, *Population and Housing*, the SACOG Board of Directors adopted a regional employment, population and housing growth forecast which represented the best balance of reasonable yet robust growth for the region. A projected economic growth rate was tied to a demographic forecast, which was then tied to a forecast of the number of types of new housing units that will be needed throughout the region. SACOG staff then allocated the employment, population and housing growth to specific geographic locations using recent growth trends, planned projects (both adopted and in-process) in each jurisdiction, planning-related issues such as flood control, habitat and infrastructure, and the long-range planning projects of jurisdictions.

As noted previously, SACOG has no land use authority and cannot directly affect the pattern that future growth will take. SACOG growth forecasts are used to plan for public infrastructure, housing, and employment throughout the region. The 2035 projections indicate that population in the MTP Plan Area is expected to grow by almost 1.3 million people, an increase of about 63%, between 2005 and 2035 (SACOG, 2007). Total population in the MTP Plan Area in 2035 is projected to be approximately 3.4 million, or 6.6% of the 2035 population of California as projected by the California Department of Finance (DOF).

The projections indicate that various portions of the region will experience significant population growth. Communities with the largest numeric population growth expected between 2005 and 2035 include, in order of magnitude, Rancho Cordova, Vineyard, Roseville, North Natomas, and Laguna. During the same period, employment is expected to increase by about approximately a half a million, a 54% increase. Over the next 30 years - several areas will experience significant job growth, including Roseville, Rancho Cordova, North Natomas, West Sacramento, and Lincoln.

The MTP for 2035 has been developed as a response to the projected population of 3,335,106 persons in the MTP Plan Area by 2035, which represents a 63 percent increase compared to the year 2005. The proposed MTP 2035 provides improvements to keep pace with the anticipated transportation needs of this population growth. This capacity will be provided in order to accommodate the projected regional population growth, and no additional capacity that could induce growth beyond that projected by SACOG, and in accordance with local general plans will be provided. In fact, while the proposed improvements are anticipated to keep pace with the projected growth to the extent feasible, additional improvements may be needed in future MTPs to fully accommodate all of the transportation needs of this growing population. The MTP 2035 is designed to serve the current and planned growth in population, housing, and employment within the next 28 years in the MTP Plan Area. The proposed project's alignment with these population and employment forecasts would therefore constitute a growth accommodating, rather than growth inducing impact. As such, the proposed project would not result in a significant environmental impact on regional resources due to an unintended increase in population.

Construction of additional housing

As outlined in Chapter 15, *Population and Housing*, SACOG receives regional housing need projections from the California Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD). SACOG, as a regional council of government, then has the responsibility to prepare a regional housing needs assessment that specifically enumerates each city's and county's fair share of the regional housing need by economic segment. Each city or county in the SACOG region must then amend its housing element to accommodate that fair share. As noted, a number of the local governments in the MTP Plan Area have either updated, or is in the process of updating, its general plan and housing element. Specifically, these include:

- Recently adopted general plans (within the past 5 years): These jurisdictions include El Dorado County, the City of Elk Grove, the City of Rancho Cordova, and the City of Yuba City.
- Undergoing general plan updates (present): City of Galt, the City of Lincoln, City of Live Oak, City of Sacramento, Sacramento County, City of Wheatland, City of Woodland, Yolo County, Yuba County, and City of West Sacramento.
- Not updating their general plans but are currently developing area-specific land use plans: City of Citrus Heights, City of Davis, City of Roseville, City of Rocklin, Placer County, City of Placerville, City of Folsom, City of Isleton, and Sutter County.
- Not currently updating general plans or community-level land use plans: City of Auburn, City of Colfax, Town of Loomis, City of Winters, and City of Marysville.

The increase of 1.3 million people in the region by 2035 will necessitate additional housing units. This growth was assumed in the SACOG regional housing needs assessment. The proposed project's alignment with the regional growth forecasts, and consequently, the housing elements, would therefore constitute a growth accommodating, rather than growth inducing impact. As such, the proposed project would not result in a significant environmental impact on regional housing resources.

Removal of obstacles to growth

Transportation projects can have a wide range of growth-inducing effects. A project may hasten growth in certain areas, retard it in other areas, intensify growth in certain locations, or shift growth from one locality to another. Generally, transportation improvements support growth, whereas land use development generates new travel demand and therefore supports the need for new transportation facility capacity. The extensions of urban services or transportation facilities into previously unserved or underserved areas, or the removal of obstacles to growth and development, are considered factors that contribute to growth inducement. Transportation infrastructure is one component of the overall infrastructure that may serve to accommodate planned growth. This infrastructure may also serve to accelerate or shift planned growth or encourage and intensify unplanned growth (i.e., growth not specifically identified in an adopted general or specific plan) within an area.

Changes in land use could result from a transportation project for several reasons:

- Development that would have occurred anyway could be arranged in a different pattern. For example, new commercial activities might choose sites that the proposed project makes more accessible rather than other sites in the study area.
- The proposed project could cause some businesses or households to locate in the study area instead of other places in the region. For example, if access is improved to land on the urban fringe, developers may capitalize on the improved access and build homes in these areas instead of elsewhere in the region.
- The proposed project could stimulate new real estate development that changes existing land uses and increases intensities in already developed areas. For example, residential properties near a new interchange might be redeveloped into commercial buildings because the changes in accessibility will make the land more attractive to commercial users who will offer higher prices for the land. (NCHRP,1998)

On a regional level, the transportation improvements in the MTP 2035 could remove obstacles to growth and therefore could have a significant growth-inducing effect. The proposed transportation improvements are aligned with the growth projected within the MTP Plan Area, but the proposed transportation improvements will likely make areas of potential growth more accessible through the alteration and development of roadway and other facilities. Obstacles to growth could also be removed because the proposed improvements are anticipated to keep pace with the projected growth to the extent feasible. However, additional improvements may be needed in the future to fully accommodate all of the transportation needs of this growing population. Through the incorporation of smart growth principles into the general plans of the member agencies SACOG's member jurisdictions have created a smart growth approach to planning regional transportation improvements that support updated general plans, redevelopment plans, and concept plans with a more compact development focus. Therefore, the proposed project is consistent with projected and planned growth in the region overall.

On a project level, environmental review will be conducted on a project-by-project basis. Under CEQA, such review must necessarily consider growth-inducing impacts.

Other activities that could significantly affect the environment

Growth-inducing impacts can occur if a project encourages and facilitates other activities that could significantly affect the environment, either individually or cumulatively. The environmental effects of the MTP 2035 are discussed throughout this Draft EIR. Impacts on the environment have been identified, and, when possible mitigated. Where SACOG could not make a determination on the program level regarding the significance of an impact, it has proposed mitigation measures that could be utilized by implementing agencies.

As stated above, growth in the MTP Plan Area is inevitable, but design of the proposed MTP 2035 was guided by adherence the smart growth principles found in the SACOG Blueprint. The projects proposed in the MTP 2035, when constructed, will greatly improve the region's roadways, highways, and transit network.