

# CHAPTER 22 – ALTERNATIVES ANALYSIS AND CEQA CONCLUSIONS

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## CEQA REQUIREMENTS

CEQA requires that an EIR contain a reasonable range of feasible alternatives that meet most or all project objectives while reducing or avoiding one or more significant effects of the project. According to CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.6(f), the range of alternatives required in an EIR is governed by a “rule of reason” that requires an EIR to set forth only those alternatives necessary to permit a reasoned choice. The range of alternatives may include alternatives to the project or its location. Where a potential alternative was examined but not chosen as one of the range of alternatives, the CEQA Guidelines require that the EIR briefly discuss the reasons the alternative was dismissed. In addition to a range of alternatives, the EIR must discuss the “No-Project Alternative,” which describes the reasonably foreseeable probable future conditions if the project is not approved (CEQA Guidelines, Section 15126.6).

The lead agency must consider the alternatives discussed in an EIR before acting on a project. The agency is not required to adopt an alternative that may have environmental advantages over the project if specific economic, social, or other conditions make the alternative infeasible (Public Resources Code, section 21002).

This chapter describes the alternatives to the proposed MTP 2035 project and compares the anticipated environmental impacts of the alternatives to those of the proposed project, analyzed in Chapters 4 - 19. Section 15126.6(b) of the CEQA Guidelines indicates that a discussion of alternatives should “focus on alternatives to the project or its location which are capable of avoiding or substantially lessening any significant effects of the project.”

## ALTERNATIVES DEVELOPMENT AND SCREENING

The development of MTP 2035 used broad public outreach combined with extensive input from elected officials, community groups and citizen planners to consider potentially \$42 billion in transportation investments to support smart growth in the region. Over 150 presentations, 17 community workshops, and an Elected Officials Summit were completed during early 2006.

The process began with over 70 elected officials representing every city and county in the six-county region at the Elected Officials Summit in January 2006. These elected officials from diverse communities—large and small, urban and rural—worked together in small groups to identify transportation challenges and opportunities.

The key challenges and priorities identified at the Elected Officials Summit helped to shape the content for the county workshops that followed. Nearly 1,800 citizen planners attended 17 community workshops held throughout the region between February and June 2006 and participated in exercises aimed at identifying their transportation priorities. In the fall, with the Transportation, Air Quality, Land Use and Leadership (“TALL”) Order forums in November, citizens were invited to learn about transportation investment options and indicate their preferences for improving their transportation system. The forums consisted of eight identical workshops held simultaneously throughout the region, linked together electronically to gather public input on the MTP2035. SACOG also partnered with a local television station to hold the first-ever regionally televised “town hall” on transportation issues. Public opinion

research was also conducted through a random sample phone survey, a random-sample online survey, a self-sampled online survey on SACOG's website, and randomly sampled focus groups.

In addition to the extensive public input process, SACOG's technical advisory committees of local agency staff and others assisted in the plan development. These include the Regional Planning Partnership, the Transit Coordinating Committee, the Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee, and the Transportation Demand Management Task Force. SACOG staff also continued the dialogue with the Board of Directors and the planning and public works departments of local governments. Native American tribal governments, state and federal environmental resource and regulatory agencies, and air quality management districts provided consultation regarding the environmental resources within the MTP Plan Area.

Based upon the input, consultation and collaboration with the community, local jurisdiction public works and planning staff, three regional alternatives were developed and further analyzed with consideration of principles that had been defined by the Board of Directors. Those elements of the alternatives that demonstrated the greatest ability to achieve high performance characteristics were incorporated into a proposed project alternative. The MTP 2035 document was developed with this alternative as its focus. The alternative and others that are being analyzed in this draft EIR, are described below.

## **ALTERNATIVES REMOVED FROM FURTHER ANALYSIS**

The State CEQA Guidelines require that this EIR identify any alternatives that were considered by SACOG but were rejected as infeasible during the scoping process and briefly explain the reasons underlying SACOG's determination that these alternatives would not be considered in this EIR. During the development of the MTP alternatives, SACOG received extensive public comment and participation in developing the alternatives that are analyzed in this draft EIR. During the scoping process, all comments and recommendations for transportation improvements to be further analyzed in the draft EIR were considered and none were rejected as infeasible.

## **ALTERNATIVES CARRIED FORWARD FOR ANALYSIS**

The alternatives described here include the No- Project Alternative and three regional alternatives in addition to the proposed MTP 2035 project, which is described in Chapter 3. During the development of the proposed MTP, SACOG developed strategies that are included in the range of reasonable alternatives for the proposed MTP that are analyzed in this program EIR. All alternatives considered for the proposed MTP for 2035 includes various combinations of multi-modal projects, including:

- Projects on local streets and roads: Road projects sponsored by local jurisdictions include proposals to widen roads, improve intersections, create expressways on local roads, complete new construction, and implement operational improvements. Projects to improve existing bridges or to construct new bridges are also included.
- Projects on the region's public transit systems: The region has fourteen public transit operators with capital and operating needs. Projects that provide a wide spectrum of transit options are included in the MTP 2035 and alternatives, including proposals to build passenger rail stations for intercity and commuter rail services, extensions of light rail transit, and new bus services. Additional trips are also proposed on the existing Capitol Corridor regional rail service, provided by Caltrans/Amtrak through a Joint Powers Authority of which SACOG is a member.

- Projects on the state and federal highway systems: Caltrans District 3 has jurisdiction over maintenance and construction activities on state highways and interstates within the MTP Plan Area. The MTP 2035 and alternatives include several types of projects proposed for these facilities. These projects include proposals to widen highways, construct or reconstruct interchanges, and create expressways on all highway facilities in the MTP Plan Area.
- Projects that support investments: Increased investment in road maintenance, traffic operational improvements, bicycle and pedestrian facilities are key components of MTP 2035. The concept of “complete streets” which are designed for many types of users and modes together instead of favoring automobile use only is thoroughly incorporated in this MTP.

The three regional alternatives that were developed throughout the public and technical process are described in more detail below. The proposed MTP 2035 project and these regional alternatives have many common transportation investments; about 3/4ths of the total funds in all alternatives is dedicated to investments that are the same. All three regional alternatives have a large increase in local bus and neighborhood shuttle services. The list of projects common to the MTP 2035 and these alternatives is included in Appendix A.

**1) No Project Alternative (Build-out of 2006 MTP):** The State CEQA Guidelines (Section 15126.6[e]) require consideration of a no-project alternative that represents the existing conditions, as well as what would reasonably be expected to occur in the foreseeable future if the project were not approved. When a project involves the revision of an existing plan, the no-project alternative should reflect continuation of the existing plan. For purposes of this analysis, it is assumed that, SACOG’s existing adopted transportation plan, the 2006 MTP, which was approved in March 2006, is continued into the future. It is assumed that the set of transportation projects contained in the 2006 MTP would likely be carried out, and that the land uses and population estimates that were assumed as the basis for the 2006 MTP are extrapolated to the planning horizon year 2035. In doing so, the projected impacts of the proposed MTP 2035 are compared to the impacts that would occur under the 2006 MTP.

The three regional alternatives represent multi-modal scenarios focused on nine key corridors that represent a large percentage of the region’s travel today. In addition to new projects for the planning horizon year 2035, Regional Alternative 1, and all regional alternatives, also assume land use projections and population estimates based in year 2035, similar to those underlying the proposed MTP 2035 project. These alternatives are as follows:

**2) Regional Alternative 1 (Auxiliary Lanes, Streetcars, and Bus Rapid Transit Emphasis):** The focus of Regional Alternative 1 is that it has the fewest new and expanded roads that are six lanes or greater. This alternative adds more miles of new auxiliary lanes than the other two alternatives, and the fewest new high-occupancy-vehicle (HOV) or carpool lane miles of the alternatives. This alternative also adds several miles of regular, or mixed flow, freeway lanes. There are also expanded and new bridges over the American and Sacramento Rivers, to improve connectivity to Downtown Sacramento, and the Feather River between Yuba City and Marysville. Transit options emphasized in this scenario are light rail, streetcars and local buses. The most extensive streetcar system would link West Sacramento and Downtown Sacramento, with streetcars also added in Rancho Cordova, Roseville and as a link from the light rail stop on Watt Avenue on I-80 into southwest Placer County. Light rail extensions south from Meadowview to Cosumnes River College and from the Downtown Sacramento train station north into the Richards Boulevard area are included. The Capitol Corridor

regional rail service would continue to operate as it does today, with no significant expansion of service. Regional Alternative 1 also features a comprehensive Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) service throughout Sacramento and southwestern Placer counties.

**3) Regional Alternative 2 (Freeway Expansion, Regional and Light Rail Emphasis)**

Regional Alternative 2 is focused on adding the most new and expanded major roads, freeways and expressways, including an extensive carpool network, new auxiliary lanes and new mixed-use lanes. The public transit emphasis is on express buses and longer distance passenger rail. Regional Alternative 2 does not include any streetcars; instead the rail system focuses on expanding the regional rail system, adding a new track from Downtown Sacramento to the city of Rocklin in Placer County, and more frequent service on the Capitol Corridor, from Rocklin through Downtown Sacramento and Yolo County to the San Francisco Bay Area. Light rail transit would be extended from Downtown Sacramento through the Natomas area in northern Sacramento to the Sacramento International Airport, and south to Cosumnes River College. Light rail transit would also be double-tracked from Sunrise Boulevard to the city of Folsom. Regional Alternative 2 has a more modest BRT system than Regional Alternative 1, located mainly within Sacramento County.

**4) Regional Alternative 3 (Carpool Lanes, Light Rail, Streetcars and Express Bus Emphasis)**

Regional Alternative 3 would provide parallel road capacity and freeway system optimization with the largest amount of carpool lanes of all alternatives, creating a nearly continuous system of new carpool lanes on Interstate 80 (I-80), U.S. 50 and I-5. This alternative has several miles of new mixed-flow freeway lanes in Placer County. Public transit services emphasize BRT lines, increased light rail frequencies and local buses. Regional Alternative 3 extends light rail north to the Natomas Town Centre and south to Cosumnes River College, and the Gold Line is double-tracked all the way to Folsom. Regional Alternative 3 also includes a streetcar linking West Sacramento and Downtown Sacramento, and has an extensive express bus system that takes advantage of the carpool lanes in this scenario’s freeway system. This alternative includes a BRT system that is more extensive than Regional Alternative 2, but less extensive than Regional Alternative 1.

These alternatives are summarized in Table 22 – 1, below.

**Table 22 – 1. Alternatives Proposed for Analysis in the MTP 2035 EIR**

<b>No Project Alternative</b>	<b>Regional Alternatives 1,2,3</b>	<b>Proposed Project</b>
2006 MTP Projects <sup>1</sup>	2035 Alternatives Projects	2035 MTP Projects
2006 MTP Land Use <sup>1</sup>	2035 Land Use	2035 Land Use
2006 MTP Population Estimate <sup>1</sup>	2035 Population Estimate	2035 Population Estimate

NOTE: <sup>1</sup>Extrapolated to 2035.

Source: SACOG, 2007.

## PROJECT PRINCIPLES, INDICATORS AND PERFORMANCE MEASURES

SACOG's mission is to "Deliver transportation projects, providing public information and serving as a dynamic forum for regional planning and collaboration in the greater Sacramento Metropolitan Area." In developing the MTP for 2035, the SACOG Board of Directors has defined specific principles, indicators and performance measures upon which to base the MTP and to use for decision-making, as it pertains to the agency's mission. They have been designed to pursue and assess the effective management of planning, programming, and transportation funding, which are integral to delivering transportation projects.

The proposed project alternative would best achieve the principles, indicators and performance measures defined by the SACOG Board of Directors for the reasons discussed below. The effectiveness of the No-Project and three regional alternatives, compared to the proposed project in achieving these principles, indicators and performance measures is discussed as follows:

**Principle 1- Access and Mobility:** This principle focuses on improving travel opportunities for businesses and residents within the MTP Plan Area. By improving access to jobs, housing, services and goods, and creating or expanding mobility options, the proposed project alternative would reduce the number of vehicle miles traveled and minimize delays due to congestion, compared to the No-Project Alternative. On a per household basis the proposed MTP 2035 reduces vehicle miles traveled by 18% compared to the 2006 MTP, which represents the No-Project Alternative. The proposed MTP 2035 Alternative reduces congestion delays by 46% by the year 2035, compared to the No-Project Alternative, which results in a 58% increase in congestion. The three regional alternatives each show greater increases in congested miles of travel per household over 2005 levels, with the greatest increase noted by Regional Alternative 2, which focuses on new and expanded major roads, freeways and expressways, including an extensive carpool network, new auxiliary lanes and new mixed-use lanes, and a public transit emphasis on express buses and longer distance passenger rail. When compared to the proposed project, the three regional alternatives offer less improvements in reducing vehicle miles traveled and congestion delay. Each of the regional alternatives provide reductions in VMT, but the reductions are not as great as that of the proposed MTP 2035 project alternative.

**Principle 2- Equity and Choice:** By providing real, viable travel choices for all people throughout the diverse MTP Plan Area, the MTP 2035 would embody the principle of equity and choice. Travel mode choice is an indicator of this principle; more choices among travel modes throughout the MTP Plan Area is a goal for the MTP. The proposed MTP 2035 project alternative results in the greatest distribution of trips by mode. This alternative results in Compared to the No Project Alternative, the proposed MTP 2035 project has less single occupant vehicle trips (42.4% compared to 43.3%); less carpool trips (45.5% compared to 46.9%); more transit trips (2.3% compared to 1.1%); and more bike/walk trips (8.3% compared to 7.1%) . The three regional alternatives each result in an increase of about 2% transit mode share over the No-Project Alternative, a 3% gain in bike/walk trips, and reductions in both single occupant vehicle and carpool trips.

**Principle 3 – Economic Vitality:** This principle addresses efficient means of connecting people to jobs and transporting goods to markets. The proposed MTP 2035 achieves this principle by demonstrating a greater ability to link people to fast travel options during peak commute periods. The number of jobs compared to the number of employed residents living in the immediate area, is commonly referred to as a "jobs/housing balance". Imbalances in jobs/housing can be problematic

because it results in longer commutes as residents travel to other locales for employment. As noted in Chapter 15, *Population and Housing*, the proposed project alternative results in an improved jobs/housing ratio throughout the MTP Plan Area over the No-Project condition. The three regional alternatives each result in large increases in jobs/housing balance over the No-Project Condition, with the largest increase shown by Regional Alternative 1, which includes light rail extensions, and expanded local buses, and new streetcar routes linking West Sacramento and Downtown Sacramento, and in Rancho Cordova, Roseville, and from as a link from the light rail stop on Watt Avenue at I-80 into southwest Placer County. Regional Alternative 1 also features a comprehensive Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) service throughout Sacramento and southwestern Placer counties. The propensity of fast, direct transit services in this alternative contributes to a strong jobs/housing balance, but not greater than that of the proposed MTP 2035 alternative, since every 1% increase in transit mode share reduces congestion per household by 10% over the No-Project Alternative.

Additionally, economic vitality is achieved by providing efficient routes to support goods delivery. The proposed MTP 2035 alternative contains strategic investments in new freeway lanes, new roadways that connect activity centers and geometrically improved interchanges that help to reduce truck congestion. The MTP also includes new auxiliary and carpool lanes on all freeways within the plan area. An auxiliary lane provides additional capacity between interchanges by adding a lane at an on-ramp, and merging it into the next downstream off-ramp. These investments increase road lane miles over the No-Project Alternative. The three regional alternatives also provide an increase in road lane miles over the No-Project Alternative, with the greatest number of road lane miles to support goods delivery in Regional Alternative 1. While Regional Alternative 3 includes 164 total new road lane miles, 131 of those are carpool lanes, which are not immediately available to trucks. Regional Alternative 1 contains 26 new general-use road lane miles, and 29 miles of new auxiliary lanes, that would increase roadway capacity that could be used by trucks. However, none of these increases are greater than those of the proposed MTP 2035 project alternative.

**Principle 4- Environmental Quality and Sustainability:** Protecting the natural resources within the MTP Plan Area is another goal for the MTP, by minimizing the impacts of transportation on the natural and physical environment. Providing for cleaner air by minimizing the effects of transportation on air quality is also vital to sustaining the environment.

The Blueprint Vision, adopted by the SACOG Board of Directors in December 2004, is a conceptual map and seven growth principles, including the principle of natural resources conservation. While the adopted vision map is not intended to be implemented literally, the map is intended to be interpreted and used as a concept-level illustration of the growth principles. The goal and result of the Blueprint map and principles, is a reduction in traffic congestion, air pollution, and consumption of agricultural and resource lands through more efficient development within and contiguous to the existing urban area, paired with a transportation system that is more integrated with the land uses. The proposed MTP 2035 project will be the first MTP for the Sacramento region to pro-actively link land use, air quality, and transportation needs by incorporating the Blueprint Vision. When compared to the base case, the Blueprint Vision proposes to reduce the amount of future urbanized lands by 357 square miles, by the year 2050. Reducing the amount of future urbanized lands minimizes the consumption of natural resources and conserves open space and natural lands. By the horizon year of the MTP, the proposed project alternative would also reduce the amount of future urbanized lands. The three regional alternatives were built on the same Blueprint Vision, so their effects on consumption of open space and natural lands would be the same.

As noted in Chapter 12, *Hydrology and Water Quality*, water quality is reflective of the land uses in the watershed. Land uses surrounding the project area include open space, urban, and agricultural uses. Open space is not anticipated to contribute pollutants to water bodies above background levels, except when it includes grazing. Urban and agricultural land uses typically contribute sediment, hydrocarbons and metals, pesticides, nutrients, bacteria, and trash. The proposed project and the three regional alternatives all would be expected to contribute similar contaminants.

**Principle 5- Financial Stewardship:** This principle is about developing a transportation system that delivers cost-effective results that are feasible to construct and maintain. Addressing environmental and congestion problems through capital intensive, supply-side solutions is expensive in both money and construction resources, such as concrete, steel, asphalt and energy. When and where infrastructure capacity investments are needed, the greatest benefits are realized when the infrastructure is managed for efficient performance. The most cost-effective infrastructure investments are usually those that maintain, preserve, and optimize existing assets.

The MTP 2035 has a priority to maintain, preserve, operate, and address safety concerns for existing infrastructure. Beyond that, the system must be expanded with urban growth. The more compact urban form that accompanies the proposed project and the three regional alternatives will intensify use of infrastructure, requiring more to maintain and operate it. These additional resources become available because investments in more efficient operations of the system and the reduced area of urbanized land in turn reduce the amount of financial resources that would be consumed to expand the system. In fact, the efficiencies from transportation improvements and more compact urban form exceed the additional costs of transportation system maintenance and operations, thus freeing resources to improve the performance of the system, to yield fewer vehicle miles traveled and greater use of walking, cycling, and transit. The stewardship, or more effective deployment, of financial resources enables the proposed project to be workable and better performing, thus making it superior to the No-Project Alternative, and thereby enabling the significant air quality, energy use, land consumption and other environmental benefits to be achieved.

**Principle 6 – Smart Land Use:** Smart land use involves mixed land uses, more infill development, and more compact development at both local and regional scale; this leads directly to a lower amount of urbanized land (for the forecast population), more land remaining in natural state, more intense and efficient use of infrastructure, and shorter trips for urban activities, and fewer trips by motor vehicle. The region’s Blueprint vision is built around smart land use, and the proposed project – this MTP – has been customized to go with the Blueprint vision of urban land. The No-Project Alternative was designed around a different land use future, one that included a minimal amount of smart land use, which would consume more land, require more new infrastructure over a larger area, and result in the need to travel longer distances with more trips for which the only choice would be motor vehicle.

The land use base for the MTP 2035 supports a transportation system that reduces growth in vehicle-miles-traveled and traffic congestion and makes walking, bicycling, and transit a preferable choice for more trips. The transportation system in this plan has been custom-designed to match this land use pattern, and about 75% of the improved performance of the system is directly due to land use, not to specific transportation projects. Thus, implementation of the locally-determined Blueprint land uses is the most important part of successfully implementing this MTP, and smart land uses become a critical part of the proposed project itself. Without the smart land uses, the proposed project would not succeed, and the No-Project Alternative would proceed by default, leading to the greater impacts across the board that are described throughout this EIR.

## EVALUATION OF ALTERNATIVES

The following analysis evaluates the potential environmental impacts associated with implementation of the No-Project and three regional alternatives compared to the proposed MTP 2035. The impact conclusions (i.e., “similar,” “greater,” “lesser”) describe the level of impact compared to the impacts of the proposed Project. The environmental effects of the proposed MTP 2035 alternative are discussed throughout the Draft EIR.

### Environmental Effects of the No Project Alternative

The No-Project Alternative represents the existing conditions, as well as what would reasonably be expected to occur in the foreseeable future if the project were not approved, based on current plans. In the absence of the proposed MTP 2035 project, it is assumed that, SACOG’s existing adopted transportation plan, the 2006 MTP, which was approved in March 2006, is continued into the future. It is assumed that the set of transportation projects contained in the 2006 MTP would likely be carried out, and that the land uses and population estimates that were assumed as the basis for the 2006 MTP are extrapolated to the planning horizon year 2035. In doing so, the projected impacts of the proposed MTP 2035 are compared to the impacts that would occur under the 2006 MTP.

The No-Project Alternative would avoid some of the environmental impacts associated with implementation of the proposed project, but would not address the continuing long-term traffic congestion and traffic-related impacts on air quality, energy, and land use. As discussed in Chapter 18, *Transportation*, vehicle miles traveled (VMT) and congested VMT would increase under the No-Project Alternative, but would be reduced under the proposed MTP 2035 project. The proposed MTP 2035 project alternative results in a greater reduction in pollutant emissions as well as greenhouse gases (GHG) than the No-Project Alternative. As discussed in Chapter 13, *Land Use and Planning*, under the No-Project Alternative, land use projections and population estimates for the planning horizon year 2035 are applicable. The No Project Alternative could have a greater growth-inducing impact than the proposed project due to the number of high-capacity projects included in the alternative that serve areas not projected to growth significantly through 2035.

Additionally, as discussed in Chapter 11, *Hazards and Hazardous Materials*, given the anticipated growth in the volume of goods movement over the period of the MTP for 2035 and the estimated associated growth in the volume of hazardous waste shipments, the No Project Alternative would not have the potential beneficial effects related to safety improvement and congestion reduction as outlined in the proposed project.

Finally, the No-Project Alternative does not implement the principles related to improving transportation services within the MTP Plan Area as established by the SACOG Board of Directors.

### Environmental Effects of the Regional Alternatives

Regional Alternative 1, and all regional alternatives, have many common transportation investments; about 3/4ths of the total funds in all alternatives is dedicated to investments that are the same as those of the proposed MTP 2035 project. All three regional alternatives also assume land use projections and population estimates based in year 2035. In many respects, the three regional alternatives are very much like the proposed project. However, each of the regional alternatives has a characteristic emphasis that distinguishes each from the other. These characteristics could lead to increased impacts due to the amount of projects included in each alternative. For example, Regional Alternative 2 is focused on adding the most new and expanded major roads, freeways and expressways, including an extensive carpool network, new auxiliary lanes and new mixed-use lanes. Regional Alternative 3 has the largest

amount of carpool lanes, and has a BRT system that is more extensive than Regional Alternative 2, but less extensive than Regional Alternative 1.

In developing the MTP for 2035, the SACOG Board of Directors has defined specific principles, indicators and performance measures upon which to base the MTP and to use for decision-making, as it pertains to the agency's mission. They have been designed to pursue and assess the effective management of planning, programming, and transportation funding, which are integral to delivering transportation projects. Of the alternatives considered, the proposed project best met the principles and performance measures established by the SACOG Board.

Based upon the input, consultation and collaboration with the community, local jurisdiction public works and planning staff, during the development of the MTP 2035, three regional alternatives were developed and further analyzed with consideration of the principles and performance measures. The elements of the alternatives that demonstrated the greatest ability to achieve high performance characteristics were incorporated into a proposed project alternative. The results of the environmental analysis on the proposed project alternative have indicated that it has less environmental effects than the No Project Alternative. However, it could have similar types of environmental effects as the three regional alternatives. The proposed project alternative has few significant and unavoidable impacts, and some beneficial impacts. Most importantly, it meets the goals and objectives of SACOG's long range plan as embodied in the principles set forth by the Board of Directors.

## **ENVIRONMENTALLY SUPERIOR ALTERNATIVE**

CEQA requires that an environmentally superior alternative be selected among the alternatives that were analyzed in the EIR. When the No-Project Alternative is the environmentally superior alternative, an EIR must also identify an environmentally superior alternative among the other alternatives (CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.6(e)(2)). In general, the environmentally superior alternative is defined as that alternative with the least adverse impacts to the project area and its surrounding environment.

Because the proposed MTP 2035 alternative, and all three regional alternatives, have many common transportation investments, and all three regional alternatives also assume land use projections and population estimates based in year 2035, the alternatives have similar component projects and therefore have similar impacts. Among the regional and proposed project alternatives evaluated in this draft EIR, there is no single alternative that is clearly environmentally superior to the others.

Regional Alternative 1 has the largest number of projects, but the scope of many of the projects could be considered to be relatively small in terms of environmental resources affected. The addition of auxiliary lanes in existing freeway right-of-way, for example would likely have a lesser extent of impacts to the natural environment than an alternative with more projects, but the addition of several miles of mixed flow, freeway lanes could have greater impacts.

Regional Alternative 2 has the least amount of projects among the alternatives, and the impacts of this alternative could therefore be considered to be less extensive than would occur under the other alternatives; however, among the projects included in this alternative are new and expanded roads, freeways and expressways, new auxiliary lanes, and new rail trackage and extensions, and the extent of environmental resources affected by these projects could be greater than other alternatives, though the actual amount of projects is less.

Regional Alternative 3 has more projects than Regional Alternative 2, but less than Regional Alternative 1. This alternative has the largest amount of carpool lanes of all alternatives, and adds new mixed-flow

freeway lanes. This alternative includes a BRT system that is more extensive than Regional Alternative 2, but less extensive than Regional Alternative 1. The new freeway lanes and the greater extent of the BRT system could result in more adverse impacts.

The proposed project and regional alternatives are all based upon the Blueprint Vision land uses, which emphasize a more compact urban form. Therefore, in terms of having the least adverse impacts to the project area and its surrounding environment, compared to the No Project Alternative and based on the analysis above, these alternatives would have the least effects to environmental resources such as agricultural resources, land use, air quality and transportation. As stated above, however, the analysis did not result in a clear distinction relative to the degree of impacts among the alternatives.

## **SIGNIFICANT AND UNAVOIDABLE IMPACTS**

A significant and unavoidable impact is one that would cause a substantial adverse effect on the environment and for which no mitigation is available to reduce the impact to a less-than-significant level. The significant and unavoidable impacts of the proposed project were discussed in detail in Chapters 4 - 19 and above and are summarized in Table ES-1. The proposed project would have the following significant and unavoidable impacts:

### **Agricultural Resources**

The following significant and unavoidable impact is associated with agricultural resources:

#### **Impact AG - 1: Convert Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance to non-agricultural use**

Implementation of the following mitigation measures would reduce the impact identified above, but not to a less-than-significant level.

#### **Mitigation Measure AG - 1: Develop Rural-Urban Connections Strategy and Create Best Practices Toolkit**

#### **Mitigation Measure AG - 2: Evaluate the Potential for Direct Farmland Conversion at the Project Level and Avoid, Minimize, and Compensate for Loss of Farmland**

#### **Mitigation Measure AG - 3: Identify Open Spaces Areas to be Preserved through Dedication or Fee Payment**

### **Energy and Global Climate Change**

The following significant and unavoidable impact is associated with energy:

#### **Impact ENE - 1: Construction Effects on Regional Energy Usage**

Implementation of the following mitigation measures would reduce the impact identified above, but not to a less-than-significant level.

## **Mitigation Measure ENE – 1: Incentives for Energy Conservation Practices**

### **Land Use and Planning**

The following significant and unavoidable impact is associated with land use and planning:

**Impact LU-6: Concurrent implementation of the proposed plan and forecast development of residential and employment land uses would result in expansion of urban areas and changes in land use and the character of neighborhoods and districts in the Sacramento Region**

Implementation of the following mitigation measures would reduce the impact identified above, but not to a less-than-significant level.

**Mitigation Measure LU-6: Continue to Implement the Sacramento Region's Blueprint growth strategy through the Community Design Grant Program and other Implementation Programs**

### **Noise**

The following significant and unavoidable impacts are associated with noise:

**Impact NOI-3: Exposure of Noise Sensitive Land Use to Increased Noise from the Operation of New Roadway and Highway Facilities**

**Impact NOI-4: Exposure of Noise Sensitive Land Use to Increased Noise from the Operation of Expanded or Transit Operations**

Implementation of the following mitigation measure would reduce the impacts identified above, but not to a less-than-significant level.

**Mitigation Measure NOI-2: Employ Measures to Reduce Noise from Transportation Systems**

### **Transportation**

The following significant and unavoidable impact is associated with transportation:

**Impact TRN-3: Substantial Increase in Congested Vehicle Miles Traveled per Household**

Implementation of the following mitigation measures would reduce the impacts identified above, but not to a less-than-significant level.

**Mitigation Measure ENE – 8: Adopt Transportation Pricing Policy**

**Mitigation Measure ENE - 9: Create Public Education Program on Individual Transportation Behavior and Climate Change**

**Mitigation Measure ENE – 11: Adopt Regional Parking Regulation Policy to Provide Incentives for Use of Alternative Modes**

**Mitigation Measure ENE – 12: Adopt Safe Routes to School Policy and Implement Pilot Program and Conduct Workshop with Cities, Counties and School Districts to Identify other Opportunities for Collaboration that may reduce Greenhouse Emissions**

**Mitigation Measure ENE – 15: Adopt a “Complete Streets” Policy**

**Mitigation Measure LU - 2: Initiate a “Complete Streets” Technical Assistance Program**

**SIGNIFICANT AND IRREVERSIBLE ENVIRONMENTAL CHANGES**

CEQA defines the significant and irreversible changes that would be caused by the proposed alternatives should they be implemented, as the use of nonrenewable resources during the initial and continued phases of a project that require a large commitment of such resources that may make unlikely the future removal or nonuse of the resources.

As discussed in Chapter 5, *Agricultural Resources*, an estimated 1,998 acres of farmland within the MTP Plan Area would be converted to new roadways. Most converted land would be in the form of long, narrow bands adjacent to roadways (lane improvements or modifications), not large, contiguous parcels. The magnitude of this impact won't be fully known until design of improvements (facilities) is completed. However, effect would represent a significant irreversible change to the environment because open space would be permanently converted.

Energy is a non-renewable resource. As discussed in Chapter 18, *Transportation*, vehicle trips would not be reduced and vehicle miles traveled would continue to increase with the No-Project Alternative. As discussed in Chapter 9, *Energy and Global Climate Change*, under the No Project Alternative, the SACOG region would consume 206,200 billion British Thermal Units (BTUs) from transportation fossil fuel combustion. With the implementation of the MTP 2035, the transportation sector would consume approximately 191,100 billion BTUs from fossil fuel combustion in 2035. Therefore, the proposed MTP 2035 project would reduce annual energy consumption by 5,100 billion BTUs in 2035 as compared to the No Project Alternative. Since the regional alternatives include projects that are common to the MTP 2035, and the No-Project Alternative would result in higher overall energy consumption as compared to the proposed MTP 2035 project, it is likely that the No Project Alternative would result in higher energy consumption than the regional alternatives. However, all alternatives would involve commitments of non-renewable energy resources. This would represent a significant and irreversible change to the environment.

As discussed in Chapter 13, *Land Use and Planning*, the MTP 2035 will be implemented concurrently with substantial residential, commercial, and industrial development in the Sacramento region over the next 28 years. SACOG projects that 1.3 million new residents and 540,000 new jobs will be added during this time period. This growth will require the conversion or redevelopment of considerable land areas in the region. SACOG estimates that about 139,588 acres will be converted to accommodate this planned growth. This development represents conversion of approximately 3.5 percent of the land in the Sacramento region to urban uses over the next 28 years. Besides the land converted to urban uses, currently urbanized land will be intensified with infill development. This would represent a significant and irreversible change to the environment.