



Legislation Text

File #: 20-0606, **Version:** 1

Department of Transportation recommending the Board:

- 1) Receive the workshop information on implementation of Senate Bill 743 which was intended to ensure that the environmental impacts of traffic, such as noise, air pollution, and safety concerns, continue to be properly addressed and mitigated through the California Environmental Quality Act ; and
- 2) Provide direction on the County's application of the significance thresholds and potential mitigation measures.

FUNDING: N/A

DISCUSSION / BACKGROUND

On September 27, 2013 the Governor signed into law Senate Bill 743 (SB 743): Environmental quality: transit oriented infill projects, judicial review streamlining for environmental leadership development projects, and entertainment and sports center in the City of Sacramento. SB 743 was originally enacted to address transportation issues related to the development of the Golden One Center in downtown Sacramento. The legislative intent of SB 743 was to: 1) ensure that the environmental impacts of traffic, such as noise, air pollution, and safety concerns, continue to be properly addressed and mitigated through the California Environmental Quality Act; and 2) more appropriately balance the needs of congestion management with statewide goals related to infill development, promotion of public health through active transportation, and reduction of greenhouse gas emissions.

In January 2019, the Natural Resources Agency finalized updates to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines including the incorporation of SB 743 modifications. The guidelines' changes were approved by the Office of Administrative Law and are now in effect. Specific to SB 743, Section 15064.3(c) states, "A lead agency may elect to be governed by the provisions of this section immediately. Beginning on July 1, 2020, the provisions of this section shall apply statewide."

SB 743 changes how transportation impacts are measured under CEQA, from using vehicle level of service (LOS) to using vehicle miles traveled (VMT). The State Office of Planning and Research (OPR) have determined that the appropriate metric for the change is VMT. This change is intended to quantify the impacts of driving on the environment compared to the impact on drivers. LOS or other delay metrics may still be used to evaluate the impact of projects on drivers as part of the County's land use entitlement reviews and impact fee programs. However, LOS will no longer be allowed to be used as the metric for evaluating transportation impacts under CEQA. As part of SB 734, Public Resources Code section 21099(b)(2) now provides that "level of service or similar measures of vehicular capacity or traffic congestion shall not be considered a significant impact on the environment" for purposes of CEQA. To implement SB 743, lead agencies will need to determine appropriate VMT methodologies, thresholds, and feasible mitigation measures.

At the behest of County and City staff, the El Dorado County Transportation Commission (EDCTC) secured funding to assist the member agencies with implementation of SB 743. EDCTC contracted

with the firm Fehr & Peers to prepare the *El Dorado County and City of Placerville SB 743 Implementation Plan*. The purpose of this project was to help EDCTC partner agencies understand the specific questions that need to be addressed when making these determinations and to provide research, analysis, and other evidence to support their final SB 743 implementation decisions. EDCTC has facilitated Fehr & Peers working in direct partnership with El Dorado County and the City of Placerville transportation staff and traffic engineers to review the existing General Plan policies, travel demand model metrics, and other technical elements.

Fehr & Peers had prepared several technical memoranda which addressed the following key questions that the EDCTC partner agencies need to consider when conducting VMT assessments.

1. Methodology - What VMT metric is preferred, and what methodology should be used to forecast 'projected generated VMT' and the 'project's effect on VMT' under baseline and cumulative conditions? Additionally, how does the selection of a threshold influence the methodology decision?
2. Thresholds - What threshold options are available to each jurisdiction and what substantial evidence exists to support the selection of a specific VMT threshold?
3. Mitigations - What would constitute feasible mitigation measures for a VMT impact given the land use and transportation context of El Dorado County and the City of Placerville?

The details of each of the technical memoranda are included in the Board memo (Attachment B).

NEXT STEPS

County staff will incorporate the direction from the Board and will return for adoption of the significance thresholds in July or August of 2020.

ALTERNATIVES

N/A

PRIOR BOARD ACTION

None

OTHER DEPARTMENT / AGENCY INVOLVEMENT

Planning and Building Department
County Counsel

CAO RECOMMENDATION / COMMENTS

It is recommended that the Board receive and file the report and provide staff direction.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

There is no change to Net County Cost associated with this agenda item.

CLERK OF THE BOARD FOLLOW UP ACTIONS

N/A

STRATEGIC PLAN COMPONENT

Infrastructure, Public Safety

CONTACT

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