

November 18, 2014

Christopher Calfee, Senior Counsel
Governor's Office of Planning and Research
1400 Tenth Street
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: Comments on OPR document "Updating Transportation Impacts Analysis in the CEQA Guidelines"

Dear Mr. Calfee:

City of San José staff reviewed your document, entitled: "Updating Transportation Impact Analysis in the CEQA Guidelines" (OPR 8/6/2014) and have several questions and comments.

Our initial questions relate to (b) Criteria for Analyzing Transportation Impacts (1) Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) and Land Use Projects (see page 13 of OPR document). It reads in part:

"A development project that is not exempt and that results in vehicle miles traveled greater than the regional average for the land use type (e.g., residential, employment, commercial) may indicate a significant impact."

Regional refers to the Metropolitan Planning Organization. In our case the Metropolitan Transportation Commission is the MPO.

Questions/comments on this approach:

1) How will the project proponent estimate project related vehicle miles traveled (VMT)? One way would be to use the regional or in our case the Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority (VTA) travel demand model. Model runs with and without the project would provide project-related VMT.

2) What are the land use types that should be used? Possibly the ones used in the regional travel demand model:

- Single family residential
- Multifamily residential
- Retail employment

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- Service employment
- Other employment
- Agriculture
- Manufacturing

Since these are the land use types in the regional travel demand model, then we can calculate regional averages for VMT for each.

So if this analysis shows that the proposed project will result in VMT per employee or per resident that is greater than the regional average for that land use type, then that "may indicate a significant impact".

3) Have we determined that the regional averages for VMT per land use category in the Bay Area are where they should be to meet greenhouse gas reduction goals? Using the current regional averages will only perpetuate our current situation, not improve it. Also, almost any development in the less dense areas of the Bay Area will likely result in VMT rates greater than regional averages.

Refer to quote before comment (1) about Criteria for Analyzing Transportation impacts. It ends with the words "may indicate a significant impact".

4) How will we determine if a development project with VMT greater than the regional average "will" create a significant impact?

There is no further discussion of this in the OPR document. Please clarify.

5) If the impact is significant, how will this impact be mitigated?

The project will need to adopt mitigation measures to reduce VMT.

- Section 4 c) Alternatives and Mitigation of the OPR document states that examples of mitigation measures and alternatives that may reduce VMT are included in Appendix F.
- Page 12 refers to mitigation measures listed in the CAPCOA guide on Quantifying Greenhouse Gas Mitigation Measures.
- Pages 17 and 18 (Text of Proposed Amendments to Appendix F) lists 15 potential measures to reduce VMT.

Many of these measures are transportation demand management measures. Examples include improving pedestrian and bicycle networks, increasing transit access and implementing a commute reduction program. Alternatives (Page 18) include increasing project density, increasing the mix of uses within the project.

How will a development project measure the VMT reduction related to these mitigation measures? And what will the process be for certifying that an impact has been mitigated?

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Section (b) (1) of the OPR document reads in part:

"Development projects that locate within one-half mile of either an existing major transit stop or a stop along an existing high quality transit corridor generally may be considered to have a less than significant transportation impact."

6) What does this mean in practice? Does this mean any development within one-half mile, even a drive through Starbucks or car dealership may be considered to have a less than significant transportation impact?

Page 9 of the OPR document states that "the Guidelines use the word 'may' to signal that a lead agency should still consider substantial evidence indicating that a project may still have significant VMT impacts."

In practice, how will the lead agency determine what projects near transit have a significant impact?

7) Generally, walk access to transit is within a quarter mile, not a half mile. Why was a half mile distance threshold selected?

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the draft CEQA guidelines. We look forward to working with you to finalize and implement the guidelines.

Sincerely,



Paul Smith
Deputy Director
Planning and Project Delivery