SB 743 CEQA Guidelines Transportation Metric Update

Governor’s Office of Planning and Research

Problems with LOS

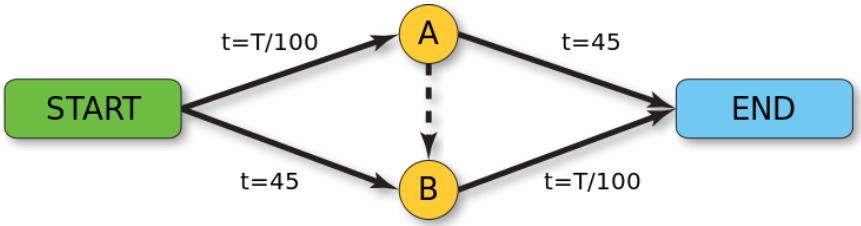
1. Bias against infill because of "last-in development" problem

- Infill loads relatively little traffic onto the regional network
- However, LOS methodology adds traffic generated by infill to existing traffic, triggering thresholds

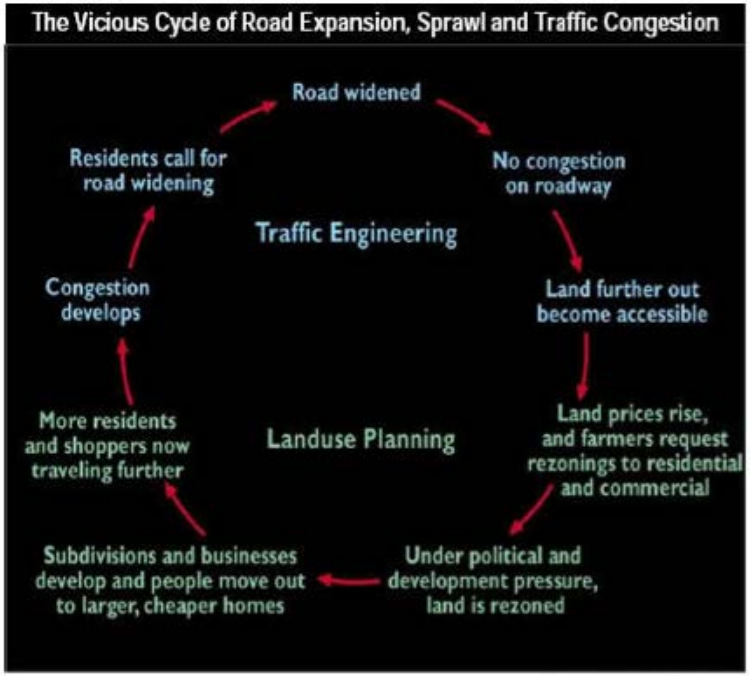
David Paul Morris / SFC

2. Scale of analysis is too small

- Registers impacts adjacent to project, ignores impacts regionally
- Spot metric insufficient to show corridor/network impact/benefit



Problems with LOS



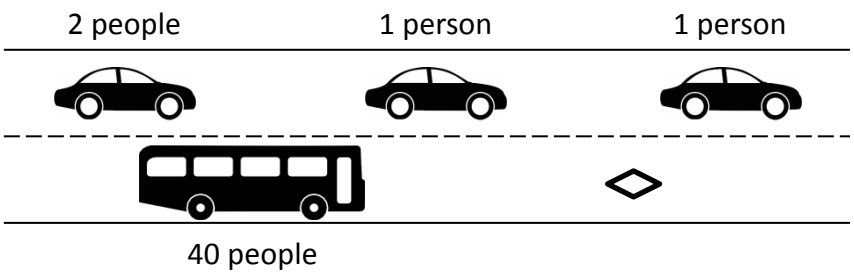
Graphic: NJ DOT

3. LOS mitigation is itself problematic

- Reducing project size pushes development to worse locations
- Widening roadways worsens livability, induces vehicle travel

4. Mischaracterizes transit, biking, walking as detriments to transportation

- A transit priority lane worsens LOS even as it improves person-throughput
- LOS characterizes pedestrians and cyclists as obstructions to cars, to be channeled/restricted

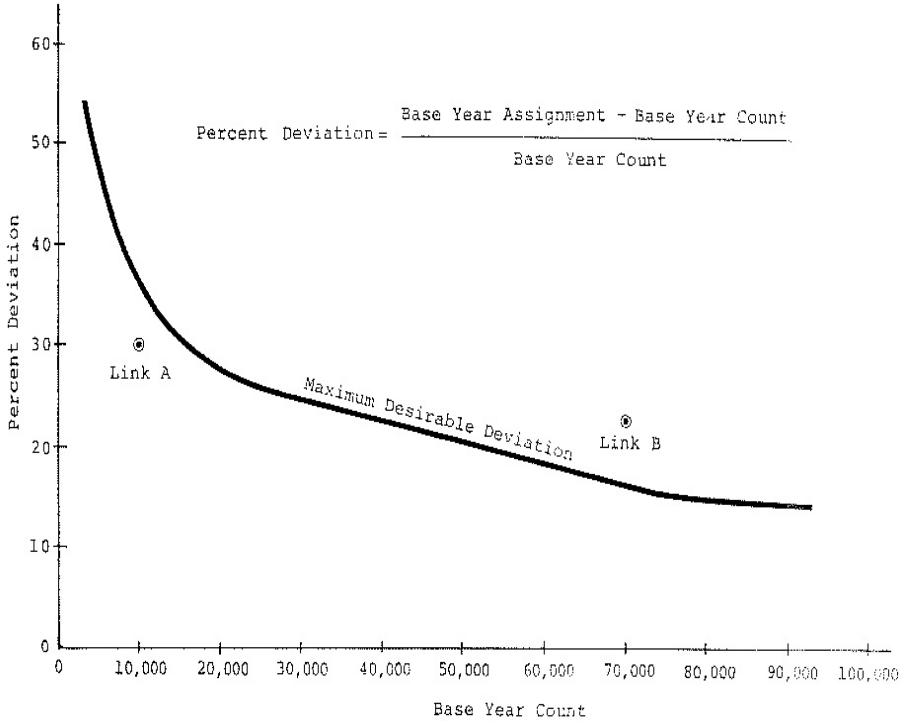


Problems with LOS

5. LOS has a well-developed methodology, but is not more precise than other metrics

- Trip distribution is difficult to predict accurately
- LOS is sensitive to error in trip distribution

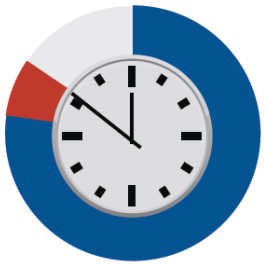
From: CDM Smith, Traffic Forecast Guidelines for the 2010s

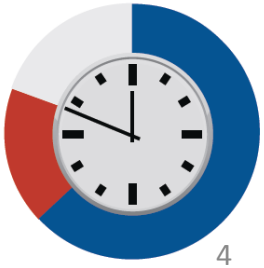


6. Delay-based metrics are problematic for modern transportation planning

- The purpose of transportation is *access to destinations*
- With smart growth, delay metrics sometimes get that backwards

Denver 1982		Denver 2007
1.09	Travel Time Index	1.31
50.6 minutes	Average travel time	49.6 minutes
46.4 mins	Travel time without traffic	37.9 minutes
4.2 mins	Extra rush hour delay	11.7 minutes





Problems with LOS

7. Maintaining roads built under existing LOS thresholds are beyond most jurisdictions' means

- Substantial maintenance shortfalls even for existing roads
- Maintaining LOS thresholds creates additional maintenance burden

CEQA Transportation Metric Update

Released:

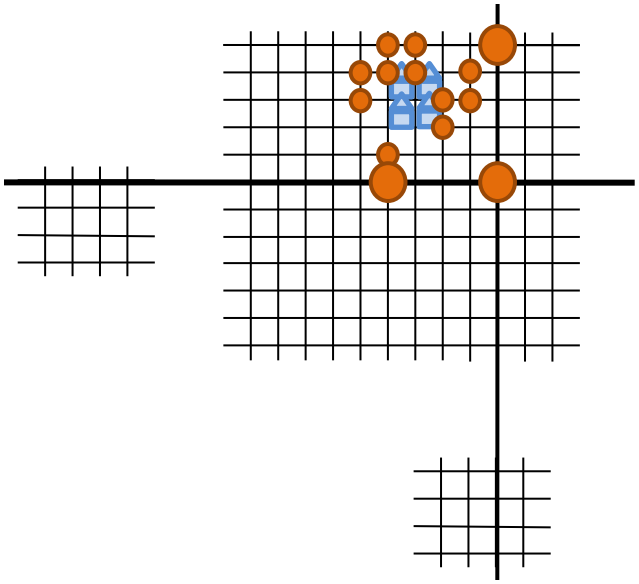
Preliminary Discussion Draft of Updates to the CEQA Guidelines Implementing SB 743

Download at opr.ca.gov

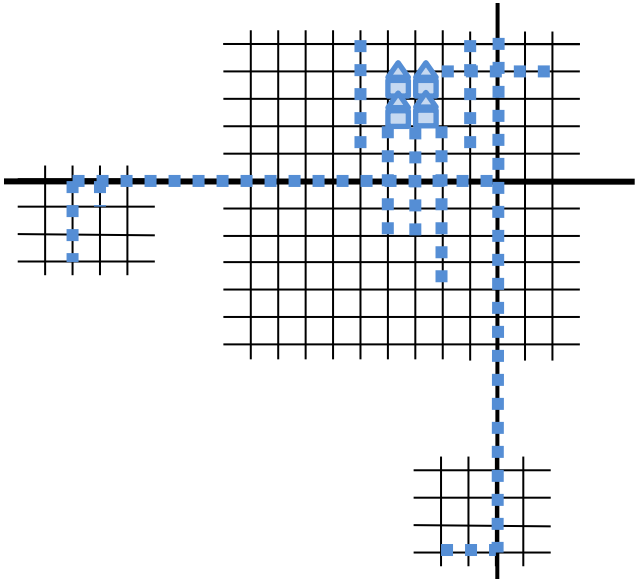
- Proposed Metric for CEQA Transportation Analysis: VMT
- Continued analysis of impacts resulting from transportation
  - Noise
  - Air Quality
  - Safety
- Delay would no longer be an impact under CEQA
  - "A project's effect on automobile delay does not constitute a significant environmental impact"

Land Use Projects

- Current: LOS on local intersections and highway segments



- Proposed: Full extent of VMT loaded onto the roadway network



Transit and Active Transport Projects

- Current: Transit, active transportation projects slow automobile traffic, trigger LOS “impact to transportation”
- Proposed: Transit, active transportation presumed to reduce VMT unless demonstrated otherwise

Roadway Expansion Projects

- Current: LOS impacts at nearby intersections from rerouted/induced vehicle travel

  (Also: Induced VMT analysis required for GHG calculation)
- Proposed: Induced (or reduced) VMT

Safety

Potential safety issues

- Increase exposure of cyclists and pedestrians (e.g. remove facilities, increase crossing distances)
- Queues extending into the mainline
- Speed differentials (<15 mph)
- Increased motor vehicle speeds
- Increased distance between bike or ped crossings

FAQ

- Changes pertain to CEQA. Jurisdictions maintain option of using LOS under their police power, e.g.
  - General plans
  - Zoning code
  - Fee programs
- Statewide shift from LOS to VMT because, though OPR looked broadly, we didn't find a geography or project type for which LOS achieved statutory and other state interests better than VMT

VMT Connection to Environment, Health, Cost

Environment

- Emissions
  - GHG
  - Regional pollutants
- Energy use
  - Transportation energy
  - Building energy
- Water
  - Water use
  - Runoff – flooding
  - Runoff – pollution
- Consumption of open space
  - Sensitive habitat
  - Agricultural land

Health

- Collisions
- Physical activity
- Emissions
  - GHGs
  - Regional pollutants
- Mental health

Cost

- Increased costs to state and local government
  - Roads
  - Other infrastructure
  - Schools
  - Services
- Increased private cost
- Housing supply/demand mismatch → future blight

Modeling VMT

- Sketch models
  - For land use projects & land use plans
  - Approximately two dozen currently available, some free and downloadable
  - Rapid improvement
- Travel demand models
  - For transportation projects & land use projects
  - Recent state investment
- Both used for GHG analyses for several years

Implementation/Logistics

Preliminary Discussion Draft of Updates to the CEQA Guidelines Implementing SB 743 available at *opr.ca.gov*

- Please share comments!
  - Comment period through October 10, 2014
- Next: OPR incorporates comments, submits to Resources Agency for formal rulemaking process
- Expect guidelines to complete rulemaking process in early 2015
- 120 day grace period for lead agencies to adopt
- Applies prospectively
- Proposed phase in period:
  - Initial implementation in TPAs, opt in elsewhere
  - Statewide starting January 2016

Thanks!

christopher.calfee@opr.ca.gov
chris.ganson@opr.ca.gov