

5.0 OTHER CEQA DISCUSSIONS

This section discusses other issues for which CEQA requires analysis in addition to the specific issue areas discussed in Section 4.0, *Environmental Impact Analysis*. These additional issues include the potential to induce growth and significant and irreversible impacts on the environment.

5.1 GROWTH INDUCING IMPACTS

In accordance with Section 15126.2(d) of the State CEQA Guidelines, “an EIR must discuss the ways in which the proposed project could foster economic or population growth, or the construction of additional housing, either directly or indirectly, in the surrounding environment.” In addition, when discussing growth-inducing impacts of a proposed project, “it must not be assumed that growth in any area is necessarily beneficial, detrimental, or of little significance to the environment” (CEQA Guidelines, Section 15126.2(d)).

a. Population and Economic Growth. A project would induce growth if it would remove barriers to population growth, such as a change to a jurisdiction’s general plan and zoning ordinance, which would allow new residential development to occur. Similarly, a project could induce economic growth depending on the extent to which it can cause managed activity in the local or regional economy.

As discussed in Section 2.0, *Project Description*, the proposed project is a comprehensive update to the Tuolumne County General Plan that establishes the community’s vision for the development of Tuolumne County through the year 2040 and will serve as the fundamental land use policy document for the County. Build-out under the General Plan Update would result in a net increase of 5,159 dwelling units, 938,000 square feet of commercial development, 196,000 square feet of industrial development, and 42 acres of public lands above existing conditions (year 2015). This represents a 24 percent increase in dwelling units, 20 percent increase in commercial development, 11 percent increase in industrial development, and less than one percent increase in public lands above existing conditions.

General Plan and Community Plan policies would direct that this potential growth would consist of infill development, and would reduce the urbanization of land in a remote location. The Tuolumne County Transportation Council adopted a population projection of 63,243 residents in Tuolumne County by the year 2040 after considering the State Department of Finance Forecasts, Census population projections and past Tuolumne County Transportation Council adopted population projections. Maximum development facilitated by the 2040 General Plan would add an estimated 8,901 residents to the existing population of Tuolumne County.

Further, within the Distinctive Communities Alternative Growth Scenario each community contains a well-defined, cohesive, and compact community built around an appropriately-scaled urban core and community gathering places. The size of each community is based on a locally defined urban development boundary area as well as a defined community boundary. Infill and mixed-use are encouraged to take advantage of existing public infrastructure and services. Residential and commercial areas become more compact within new urban



development boundaries promoting mixed-use and higher density residential development to supply housing demand.

In addition, the General Plan Update would accommodate up to 938,000 square feet of commercial development and 196,000 square feet of industrial development. This would result in new employment opportunities (including short-term construction jobs), improve the jobs to housing balance within the community plan areas, and foster economic sustainability within the County. It would also result in greater employment-generating uses that may generate a secondary demand for goods and services to support new and expanding businesses. Thus, the General Plan Update will increase the amount of economic activity resulting from the direction and strategies within the County, which would result in economic growth; however, the growth would be consistent with the regional growth forecasts that have been adopted for the County.

b. Removal of Obstacles to Growth. A physical obstacle to growth typically involves the lack of public service infrastructure. The extension of public service infrastructure, including roadways, water mains, and sewer lines, into areas that are not currently provided with these services is expected to support new development. Similarly, the elimination or change in a regulatory obstacle, including existing growth and development policies, can result in new population growth.

The Tuolumne Utilities District is a waste and wastewater utility. Growth within the community districts depends on those districts expanding their service systems. The General Plan Update's policies provide for the expansion of infrastructure to accommodate new growth within the existing communities. To the extent that new infrastructure would be sized to serve only existing and planned development (including growth related to the community plans), growth inducement would not be considered detrimental to the environment.

In addition to the above, a number of proposed General Plan Land Use policies have the potential to physically affect the environment by way of land use designation changes or physical alterations. These include:

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| <i>Policy 1.A.1</i> | <i>Promote the efficient use of land to conserve natural resources.</i> |
| <i>Policy 1.A.4</i> | <i>Promote infill and clustered patterns of development that facilitate the efficient and timely provision of urban infrastructure and services.</i> |
| <i>Policy 1.A.5</i> | <i>Establish target growth areas to serve community needs and enhance the quality of life by providing for economic, housing and cultural opportunities within existing and new defined communities. Where possible, these target growth areas should be placed near transit stops, commercial centers, and other services.</i> |
| <i>Policy 1.A.14</i> | <i>Encourage economic development and a mix of uses in unincorporated urban service areas that minimize the need for nearby residents to travel greater distances to access goods and services.</i> |
| <i>Policy 1.D.3</i> | <i>Encourage urban residential development projects located within ¼ mile of a transit stop.</i> |



Policy 1.D.4 Utilize planning tools and incentives to encourage transit oriented development.

Policy 1.D.5 Promote the provision of multi-modal access to activity centers such as public facilities, commercial centers and corridors, employment centers, transit stops, schools, parks, recreation areas, and tourist attractions.

c. Conclusion. The proposed General Plan Update inherently represents carefully-planned growth within the area in coordination with the various community districts, calling for the provision of new housing, industrial, and commercial uses, along with enhancements to and protection of the natural environment. Thus, by its nature, the intent of the plan is to reduce the potential for growth-inducing impacts of anticipated County Growth.

5.2 IRREVERSIBLE ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS

PRC, Section 21100(b) (2), and CEQA Guidelines, Section 15126.2(b), require that any significant and unavoidable effect on the environment must be identified. In addition, CEQA Guidelines, Section 15093(a), allows the decision-making agency to determine whether the benefits of a proposed project outweigh the unavoidable adverse environmental impacts of implementing the project. The County can approve a project with unavoidable adverse impacts if it prepares and adopts a “Statement of Overriding Considerations” setting forth the specific reasons for making such a judgment. For each of the unavoidable adverse impacts, the County must prepare and adopt a Statement of Overriding Considerations if the County approves the Project. The Executive Summary provides detailed summary tables that identify the project’s environmental impacts, proposed mitigation measures, and level of significance after mitigation.

Construction activity that would be accommodated under the General Plan Update would involve the use of building materials and energy, some of which are non-renewable resources. Consumption of these resources would occur with any development in the region and are not unique to Tuolumne County or the General Plan Update. The addition of new residential and non-residential development in the County would irreversibly increase local demand for non-renewable energy resources such as petroleum. Increasingly efficient building fixtures and automobile engines, as well as implementation of policies included in the General Plan Update, are expected to offset the demand to some degree. It is not anticipated that growth accommodated under the General Plan would significantly affect local or regional energy supplies.

Growth facilitated by the General Plan would require an irreversible commitment of law enforcement, fire protection, water supply, wastewater treatment, and solid waste disposal services. As discussed in Sections 4.13 *Public Services* and 4.16 *Utilities*, impacts to public services and utilities would be reduced to a less than significant level with payment of impact mitigation fees and/or implementation of policies included in the General Plan Update.

The additional vehicle trips associated with growth through 2040 would incrementally increase local traffic, noise levels and regional air pollutant emissions. As discussed in Section 4.3, *Air Quality*, implementation of General Plan policies and regional air pollution programs would



reduce the air pollutant emissions associated with individual future development projects to below significance thresholds. As discussed in Section 4.11, *Noise*, implementation of proposed policies and Mitigation Measures would reduce the noise impacts associated with future growth to a less than significant level. As discussed in Section 4.15, *Transportation and Circulation*, development facilitated by the General Plan Update would result in deficiencies to the local circulation system based on recommended level of service standards. Mitigation measures are available to address all projected deficiencies for roadway segment and intersections within the County. However, these mitigations may not be possible due to physical constraints, financial reasons, or jurisdictional control. Without the incorporation of the stated mitigation measures, impacts would be significant and unavoidable.

Future development in accordance with the General Plan Update could occur in areas that contain important farmland and/or Williamson Act contracts. Under the proposed land use plan that would allow urban development within communities and rural residential development in surrounding areas, no mitigation is available to prevent the potential loss of Important Farmland and/or Williamson Act contracts. Therefore, the General Plan Update would result in Class I, significant and unavoidable impacts related to agricultural conversion.

