

FAQ

Evaluating Transportation Impacts in CEQA Based on New Guidelines as Directed by SB 743

What was the legislative intent of SB 743 (2013)?

- 1 Balance the needs of congestion management with the following statewide goals: reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, infill development, and public health through active transportation
- 2 Ensure that the environmental impacts of traffic such as noise, air pollution, and safety concerns continue to be addressed and mitigated through CEQA

What does the new CEQA Section 15064.3 adopted by the state in December 2018 require?

- 1 A project's effect on automobile delay (i.e., Level of Service) shall not constitute a significant environmental impact under CEQA
- 2 A lead agency may adopt these provisions immediately, but no later than July 1, 2020
- 3 VMT is the "most appropriate" measure of transportation impacts
- 4 Other relevant considerations may include effects on transit and non-motorized travel
- 5 VMT exceeding an applicable threshold may indicate a significant impact
- 6 Projects should be presumed to have a less than significant VMT impact if they are located in a transit priority area (TPA) or would reduce VMT
- 7 A lead agency has discretion to choose the most appropriate methodology to evaluate a project's VMT
- 8 A lead agency may use models to estimate a project's VMT, and may revise those VMT estimates based on substantial evidence
- 9 Any assumptions used to estimate VMT must be documented and explained

What are the current policies and requirements for transportation impact analysis in the Town of Los Gatos?

- 1 The current Los Gatos 2020 General Plan includes Policy TRA-3.4 which states "New projects shall not cause the level of service for intersections to drop more than one level if it is at Level A, B, or C and not drop at all if it is at D or below."
- 2 The current Los Gatos 2020 General Plan includes Policy TRA-3.5 which states "If project traffic will cause any intersection to drop more than one level if the intersection is at LOS A, B, or C, or to drop at all if the intersection is at LOS D or below, the project shall mitigate the traffic so that the level of service will remain at an acceptable level."
- 3 The current Los Gatos 2020 General Plan includes Policy TRA-3.6 which states "Pedestrian and bicycle safety shall not be compromised to improve or maintain the level of service of an intersection."

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- 4 The Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority (VTA) is the Congestion Management Agency (CMA) for Santa Clara County. VTA has a statutory role to work with its 15 Member Agencies on issues related to land use and transportation, through its Congestion Management Program (CMP). Signalized intersections that are designated CMP intersections and those controlled by Santa Clara County have an LOS E acceptable standard.

What is Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT)?

- 1 VMT refers to "Vehicle Miles Traveled," a metric that accounts for the number of vehicle trips generated plus the length or distance of those trips. For transportation impact analysis, VMT is generally expressed as VMT per capita for a typical weekday. For instance, the 2012 average daily VMT per capita for the nine county Bay Area region was 15.3 miles per person per day.

What is Level of Service (LOS)?

LOS refers to "Level of Service," a metric that assigns a letter grade to network performance. The typical application is to measure the average amount of delay experienced by vehicle drivers at an intersection during the most congested time of day and assign a report card range from LOS A (fewer than 10 seconds of delay) to LOS F (more than 80 seconds of delay).

What is the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA)?

- 1 CEQA refers to the California Environmental Quality Act. This statute requires identification of any significant environmental impacts of state or local actions including approval of new development or infrastructure projects. The process of identifying these impacts is typically referred to as the environmental review process.

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What decisions does a local agency need to make to implement these new guidelines?

- 1 VMT Metric?
 - a VMT in absolute terms or
 - b VMT per capita, VMT per employee, and VMT per service population
- 2 VMT Methodology?
 - a How to calculate VMT – travel model, spreadsheet tool, other methods
 - b Total VMT or partial VMT associated with select vehicle types, land uses, and/or trip purposes/tours
 - c Project generated VMT versus project effect on VMT
 - d Same methodology for threshold setting and project analysis
- 3 VMT Impact Significance Threshold?
 - a Threshold: Level of reduction in VMT below existing conditions?
 - b Thresholds: (1) Project VMT and (2) Cumulative Impacts (project's effect on VMT)
 - c Thresholds: (1) Land Use Projects, (2) Land Use Plans, (3) Transportation Projects
 - d Is the level of VMT reduction compared to regional VMT, citywide VMT, or other baseline?
 - e For cities and counties, are VMT impacts best addressed at the general plan level given that all land use decisions only influence land use supply and CEQA Section 15183 provides streamlining for subsequent projects?
- 4 VMT Mitigation Options?
 - a VMT mitigation options for land use projects involve either changing the physical design of the project (i.e., its density, mix of use, street design, etc.) or requiring trip reduction strategies as part of a transportation demand management (TDM) program.
 - i Are cities and counties willing to require stringent TDM programs with annual monitoring and adjustments if projects do not accomplish required VMT reductions?
 - ii Should cities and counties instead rely on mitigation programs such as impact fee programs that are based on a VMT-reduction nexus?

What are Infill Opportunity Zones (IOZs):?

Locations that meet location eligibility criteria for locally-adopted Infill Opportunity Zones as defined in the California Government Code, Section 65088.1(e):

Within ½ mile of a Major Transit stop, defined as any of the following:

- Existing rail stations
- Planned rail stations in an adopted Regional Transportation Plan
- Existing ferry terminals with bus or rail service

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- Planned ferry terminals with bus or rail service in an adopted Regional Transportation Plan
- Intersection of at least two existing or planned bus routes with headways of 15 minutes or less during both the morning and evening peak periods; or
- Within a ½ mile of a High-Quality transit corridor, defined as an existing or planned fixed-route bus corridor with headway of 15 minutes or less during both the morning and evening peak periods

The Town has a small area around the planned Vasona Light Rail Station that is eligible as an Infill Opportunity Zone.