



**TOWN OF LOS GATOS  
COUNCIL AGENDA REPORT**

MEETING DATE: 01/21/2020

ITEM NO: 11

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DATE: January 13, 2020  
TO: Mayor and Town Council  
FROM: Laurel Prevetti, Town Manager  
SUBJECT: Receive a Report on How Vehicle Miles Travelled and Level of Service Analysis Will Work Together in Shaping Future Development Projects

**RECOMMENDATION:**

Receive a report on how vehicle miles travelled (VMT) and level of service analysis (LOS) will work together in shaping future development projects.

**BACKGROUND:**

On October 10, 2019 the Council held a study session to facilitate the first of several discussions on Vehicle Miles Travelled (VMT) as the new transportation metric for California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) review as mandated by Senate Bill 743.

The new law changes CEQA evaluation for transportation, moving away from measuring level of service (LOS) and moving towards a measure of VMT. VMT is the measure of distance in miles that a vehicle travels, with one mile equivalent to one VMT.

Since that meeting in October, staff has been working with a consultant to help with implementing this change. Over the next several months, staff will bring elements of the VMT process to the Council for review and phased decision making, with the intent of adopting new CEQA standards prior to the State deadline of July 1, 2020.

**DISCUSSION:**

While VMT is the new standard for CEQA analysis, there continues to be a need to manage local roadways through conditions placed on new projects during the review and permitting phases. These conditions would come by way of a transportation analysis that identifies local roadway needs for all users (bicycles, pedestrians, and vehicles).

**PREPARED BY:** Matt Morley  
Parks and Public Works Director

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Reviewed by: Town Manager, Assistant Town Manager, Town Attorney, and Finance Director

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DISCUSSION (continued):

Historically, the CEQA analysis related to transportation has focused on LOS at intersections. More specifically, this has been the measure of intersection performance in terms of delay, with intersections receiving a rating from A to F. Specific thresholds, based on increases in delay at intersections, would trigger required mitigations. The practical result has been project conditions that require changes to the roadway system to mitigate the measured increase in delay. This often leads to changes in roadway architecture, such as the addition of travel lanes, to help the intersections perform better for vehicles.

VMT takes a different approach and, from a bigger picture view, looks at changes that can be made to a project (versus the previous method of making changes to the roadway network) to reduce impacts to the transportation network. VMT is an origin-based (project) approach whereas LOS has been a recipient (roadways) based approach. A simple example is the issuance of transit passes to residents or employees on a developing property. By issuing transit passes, a measurable reduction in VMT can be made. Many of these elements of VMT, including which measures to implement and what level of reduction is enough will be topics of discussion and decision making for the Council in the coming months.

However, the Town will still need a way to manage local roads and their functionality for all users (including vehicles, bicycles, pedestrians, and others). The VMT measure does not provide a means to do this – VMT measures how far vehicles will travel, but not which intersections or which roads they will use or where they may create local congestion. For this reason, a transportation analysis will continue to be necessary in the future.

In the short term, staff recommends maintaining the current transportation analysis as identified in the Town's Traffic Impact Policy. This will allow for a continued focus on implementing VMT by the July deadline. Subsequently, the Council may want to look at policy changes with respect to traffic analysis to include a stress analysis for pedestrians and bicyclists, as well as the functionality analysis for vehicles. A stress analysis is a measure of how comfortable a roadway is for users of varying age, skills, and abilities. By expanding the transportation analysis, roadways are modified to the benefit of all users.

CONCLUSION:

Staff is introducing this discussion early as some perceptions may exist that VMT will fully replace the analysis of local streets and roads, staff wanted to avoid any confusion in future discussions. Staff believes that ongoing transportation analysis on local roadway performance will need to continue outside of the CEQA VMT analysis, with an expansion of the current LOS analysis to meet the needs of all users.

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FISCAL IMPACT:

There is no fiscal impact as a result of this item.

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT:

This is not a project defined under CEQA, and no further action is required.

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