



CITY OF SAN MATEO

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Agenda Report

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TO: Planning Commission
FROM: Kohar Kojayan
PREPARED BY: Community Development Department
MEETING DATE: February 25, 2020

SUBJECT:
Transportation Analysis Policy Development - Introduction

RECOMMENDATION:

Receive information on the transportation policy development effort to comply with Senate Bill 743 and provide direction to staff.

BACKGROUND:

The purpose of this agenda report is to familiarize Planning Commission with the changes to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) as a result of the passage of California Senate Bill 743 (Steinberg, 2013) (SB 743). This report is also intended to provide the Commission with the scope of work and schedule for the City's work to comply with SB 743 by the mandated date of July 1, 2020, and to provide an opportunity to discuss and provide comments. This information was also shared with the City Council at their Tuesday, February 18, 2020 meeting.

Transportation analysis conducted by the City under CEQA has historically evaluated Level of Service (LOS) and vehicle delay at intersections to assess localized traffic impacts as a result of planned development. The City transportation policies used for the CEQA analysis are contained in the Circulation Element of the current General Plan 2030. Specifically, Policy C2.1 identifies the City's standard as "Maintain a Level of Service no worse than mid LOS D, average delay of 45.0 seconds, as the acceptable Level of Service for all intersections within the City." The potential transportation impact that might be caused by proposed land development is evaluated by conducting Transportation Impact Analyses (TIA). TIAs assess future conditions of the roadway network both with and without the project while incorporating future growth estimates. The TIAs compare the estimated incremental impact from the project to the City-adopted policies and, if the project impacts exceed City policy thresholds, traffic mitigation measures can also be evaluated and appropriate impact fees can be assessed to the project.

Under SB 743, the state is seeking to "...balance the needs of congestion management with statewide goals related to infill development, promotion of public health through active transportation, and reduction of greenhouse gas emissions." To this end, SB 743 eliminates LOS, vehicle delay, or other similar measures of vehicular capacity or congestion as the metric to assess significant transportation impacts under CEQA.

To align transportation analysis with state goals for climate change and active transportation, the Governor's Office of Policy and Research (OPR) developed guidelines for new metrics to utilize in CEQA transportation analyses. OPR published a final technical advisory, based on stakeholder engagement and feedback, during December 2018 that identifies Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) as the required metric for transportation analysis under CEQA.

VMT analysis identifies how projects affect the broader multimodal transportation network (e.g., car, transit, bicycle, pedestrian), accessibility, and emissions. Analyses of VMT include all modes of transportation, and resulting mitigation measures focus on transportation demand management (TDM) measures rather than improvements to traffic operations or infrastructure to accommodate additional traffic. Common TDM measures include improved pedestrian or bicycle facilities, expanded transit options, and on-site amenities to reduce trips. As such, the mitigation measures to reduce VMT associated with a project increase access to active transportation modes and reduce greenhouse gas emissions attributed to transportation. In contrast, use of local LOS and the assessment of traffic impacts near a proposed project only addresses the impacts to the capacity of the transportation network and does not necessarily include all modes of transportation, accessibility, or emissions.

To comply with SB 743, jurisdictions are required to adopt CEQA transportation analysis policies based on VMT no later than July 1, 2020. SB 743 does not prevent jurisdictions from continuing to analyze delay or LOS as part of General Plans, fee programs, or general traffic monitoring.

City staff, in collaboration with Kittelson & Associates, Inc., will be evaluating methodologies and potential thresholds that meet the needs of the City and its community while complying with the requirements of SB 743. The staff presentation at this meeting will include information regarding:

- SB 743 Legislation and OPR Guidelines,
- How VMT is calculated,
- Examples of what other cities and agencies in California are doing to comply with SB 743,
- How the traffic impact study guidelines will be modified to include a blend of both traditional LOS-based metrics and VMT,
- How TDM measures can be used to mitigate VMT impacts and trip reduction,
- What types of tools may be developed to simplify this process, and
- How this work ties in with the ongoing General Plan Update and the City travel demand model update.

Staff and the consultant team presented an informational update to City Council on February 18, 2020. City Council expressed a preference for implementing both VMT and LOS-based metrics as part of the City's new transportation analysis policy, and suggested including evaluation of mobile source (cell phone) data to complement and verify the travel demand model.

Staff intends to present to the Planning Commission during late spring to discuss the proposed VMT policy and obtain feedback and comments. Following the presentation to the Planning Commission, staff will present the proposed policy to City Council during June 2020 for review and adoption. The resulting VMT policy will be coordinated with the General Plan 2040 work currently underway, and the new policy will align with the goals and policies of the updated Circulation Element contained therein.

ENVIRONMENTAL DETERMINATION:

This transportation analysis policy development is not a project subject to CEQA, because it can be seen with certainty that it will not cause a physical change in the environment. (Public Resources Code Section 21065.)

NOTICE PROVIDED

All meeting noticing requirements were met.

ATTACHMENTS

None.

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