

### 2.1 INTRODUCTION

This Draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR) assesses the expected environmental impacts resulting from adoption and subsequent implementation of the proposed 2009 Comprehensive Transportation Plan (CTP). The 2009 CTP is a multi-modal transportation policy document and plan that prioritizes transportation projects and programs in Sonoma County for the next 25 years. The financially constrained 2009 CTP includes capital highway, roadway, and transit improvements listed in the Measure M Strategic Plan, constrained programs identified in the Metropolitan Transportation Commission's (MTC's) Draft Transportation 2035 Plan, and trend-based assumptions for growth and pricing of the transportation system. It should be noted that this 25-year transportation plan does not require approval from any other agencies, though individual projects and programs may require discrete actions from lead agencies as they are considered for implementation.

This Draft EIR was prepared in accordance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and CEQA Guidelines. The Sonoma County Transportation Authority (SCTA) is the lead agency for the environmental review of the proposed 2009 CTP (proposed project) evaluated herein and has the principal responsibility for approving the project. Prior to adoption of the 2009 CTP, the SCTA Board of Directors must certify the Final EIR as meeting all applicable CEQA requirements.

### 2.2 SCOPE OF THE EIR

The CEQA Guidelines identify several types of EIRs, each applicable to different project circumstances. This EIR has been prepared as a Program EIR pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15168. A Program EIR is defined as an EIR:

*[W]hich may be prepared on a series of actions that can be characterized as one large project and are related either:*

- (1) Geographically,*
- (2) As logical parts in the chain of contemplated actions,*
- (3) In connection with issuance of rules, regulations, plans or other general criteria to govern the conduct of a continuing program, or*
- (4) As individual activities carried out under the same authorizing statutory or regulatory authority and having generally similar environmental effects which can be mitigated in similar ways.*

The program-level analysis considers the broad environmental effects of the overall proposed 2009 CTP. As permitted by CEQA, this document is consistent with and tiers from an EIR prepared for MTC's Transportation 2030 Plan that addresses the environmental effects of a nine-county transportation plan that includes Sonoma County. The environmental issues addressed in the Draft EIR were established through review of environmental documentation developed for the project, environmental documentation for nearby projects, and public and agency responses to the Notice of Preparation (NOP).

This Draft EIR includes a description of the environmental setting, an environmental impact analysis, mitigation measures, alternatives, significant irreversible environmental changes, growth-inducing impacts, and cumulative impacts. These elements are identified in the CEQA

## **2.0 INTRODUCTION AND STUDY APPROACH**

---

Guidelines (Sections 15122 through 15132), which identify the content requirements for Draft and Final EIRs. Mitigation measures necessary to address significant environmental impacts identified in this Draft EIR can be incorporated as policies in the Final 2009 CTP and will help ensure that feasible mitigation measures are implemented at the project level. The implementing agencies and local lead agencies shall be responsible for ensuring adherence to the mitigation measures as CTP projects are considered for approval over time.

### **2.3 PURPOSE OF THE EIR**

The SCTA, acting as the lead agency under CEQA, has prepared this Draft EIR to provide the public and responsible/trustee agencies with information about the potential environmental effects of the proposed 2009 CTP. As described in CEQA Guidelines Section 15121(a), an EIR is a public informational document that assesses potential environmental effects of the proposed project and identifies alternatives and mitigation measures to the proposed project that could reduce or avoid any adverse environmental impacts. Public agencies are charged with the duty to consider and minimize environmental impacts of proposed projects where feasible, and an obligation to balance public objectives, including economic, environmental, and social factors.

CEQA requires the preparation of an EIR prior to approving any project that may have a significant effect on the environment. For the purposes of CEQA, the term "project" refers to the whole of an action which has the potential for resulting in a direct physical change or a reasonably foreseeable indirect physical change in the environment (CEQA Guidelines Section 15378[a]). With respect to the proposed 2009 CTP, the SCTA has determined that the proposed plan is a "project" within the definition of CEQA.

This environmental assessment of the proposed 2009 CTP is designed to inform decision-makers, responsible agencies, trustee agencies, and the general public of the proposed action and the range of potential environmental impacts of that action.

### **2.4 INTENDED USES OF THE EIR**

This Draft EIR is intended to evaluate the environmental impacts of adoption and implementation of the 2009 CTP. Subsequent projects that may be associated with the project are identified in Section 3.0, Overview of the 2009 Comprehensive Transportation Plan, of this document and will be evaluated at the time they are considered to determine whether they would result in impacts that fall within those disclosed in this Program EIR or whether additional environmental review is required.

When individual projects or activities under the 2009 CTP are proposed, implementing agencies would be required to examine the projects or activities to determine whether their effects were adequately analyzed in this Draft EIR. Lead agencies can streamline those subsequent environmental assessments by "tiering" from this Program EIR by incorporating relevant discussion by reference and concentrating on issues specific to the later project that were not addressed in this document (CEQA Guidelines Section 15152). Examples of lead agencies that may have authority over projects and programs include, but are not be limited to, the California Department of Transportation for capital improvements on state highways, local jurisdictions for capital improvements on local roads, and the Sonoma-Marín Area Rail Transit for SMART commuter rail improvements. These agencies could utilize this Draft EIR's analysis in preparing the environmental assessments required under CEQA.

As a Program EIR, the preparation and certification of this document does not relieve the sponsors of the projects listed in the 2009 CTP from complying with the requirements of CEQA. Individual projects are required to prepare a project-specific analysis to fulfill CEQA. The lead agency responsible for reviewing these projects shall determine the level of review needed, and the scope of that analysis will depend on the given project. These projects may, however, use the discussion of regional impacts in this Draft EIR as a basis of their assessment of these regional or cumulative transportation impacts.

### 2.5 ORGANIZATION

This Draft EIR is organized in the following manner:

#### SECTION 1.0 – EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Executive Summary (CEQA Guidelines Section 15123) includes a summary of the Draft EIR and the potentially significant impacts of the proposed 2009 CTP.

#### SECTION 2.0 – INTRODUCTION AND STUDY APPROACH

Section 2.0 provides an introduction and overview describing the intended use of the Draft EIR and the review and certification process. It also includes a summary project description, summary of other alternatives, and discussion of any unresolved planning issues.

#### SECTION 3.0 – OVERVIEW OF CTP

A project description that provides the appropriate level of information necessary for the evaluation and review of environmental impacts is required under CEQA (CEQA Guidelines Section 15124). The “project” analyzed in this Draft EIR is the 2009 CTP. The project description includes a description of the project location and geographic characteristics of the project area; objectives of the 2009 CTP; a general description of the project’s technical, economic, and environmental characteristics; and the discretionary actions associated with the 2009 CTP.

#### SECTION 4.0 – ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING, IMPACTS, AND MITIGATION MEASURES

Section 4.0 contains an analysis of environmental topic areas as identified in Subsection 2.7 below. Each subsection contains a description of the existing setting of the project area, identifies project-related impacts, and recommends appropriate mitigation measures. This section also describes the general assumptions used to evaluate the direct and indirect impacts of the 2009 CTP.

#### SECTION 5.0 – CUMULATIVE IMPACTS

Section 5.0 discusses the cumulative impacts of each topic area associated with the proposed project (i.e., the 2009 CTP). This includes a discussion of the CTP’s potential impacts on global climate change.

#### SECTION 6.0 – PROJECT ALTERNATIVES

This section evaluates five alternatives for the proposed 2008 CTP, including a “no project” alternative, at a qualitative level. This section also includes a description of alternatives that were considered and subsequently eliminated from in-depth analysis, along with reasons for their elimination. The purpose of the project alternatives section is to provide a summary of the comparative effects of the alternatives, focusing on the significant impacts and on mitigation of such impacts. An “environmentally superior” alternative will be identified pursuant to State CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.6(e)(2).

## 2.0 INTRODUCTION AND STUDY APPROACH

---

### SECTION 7.0 – LONG-TERM IMPLICATIONS OF THE PROJECT

This section contains discussions and analysis of various topical issues mandated by State CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.2. The section also includes significant environmental effects that cannot be avoided if the project is implemented, significant irreversible environmental changes, and growth-inducing impacts.

### SECTION 8.0 – REPORT PREPARERS

This section lists all authors and agencies that assisted in the preparation of the report by name, title, and company or agency affiliation.

### VOLUME II – APPENDICES

This volume includes all notices and other procedural documents pertinent to the Draft EIR, as well as technical material prepared to support the analysis.

## 2.6 ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW PROCESS

The review and certification process for the Draft EIR involves the following general procedural steps:

### NOTICE OF PREPARATION

In accordance with Section 15082 of the CEQA Guidelines, the SCTA prepared a Notice of Preparation (NOP) of an EIR for the project on August 1, 2008. The SCTA was identified as the lead agency for the proposed project. This notice was circulated to the public, local, state, and federal agencies, and other interested parties to solicit comments on the proposed project. Two scoping meetings, one in the afternoon and one in the evening, were held on August 14, 2008, at the SCTA offices in the City of Santa Rosa to receive comments. Concerns raised in response to the NOP were considered during preparation of the Draft EIR. The NOP and responses by interested parties are presented in **Appendix A**. Responses received by interested parties during the public review period for the NOP are summarized below.

### DRAFT EIR AND PUBLIC NOTICE/PUBLIC REVIEW

This document constitutes the Draft EIR. The Draft EIR contains a description of the project, description of the environmental setting, identification of project impacts, and mitigation measures for impacts found to be significant, as well as an analysis of project alternatives. Upon completion of the Draft EIR, the SCTA will file the Notice of Completion (NOC) with the Governor's Office of Planning and Research to begin the public review period (Public Resources Code, Section 21161).

Concurrent with the NOC, the SCTA will provide public notice of the availability of the Draft EIR for public review and invite comment from the general public, agencies, organizations, and other interested parties. The public review and comment period should be no less than thirty (30) days. Public comment on the Draft EIR will be accepted both in written form and orally at public hearings. Although no public hearings to accept comments on the Draft EIR are required by CEQA, the SCTA expects to hold one or more public comment meeting(s) during the review period. Notice of the time and location of the hearing will be published prior to the hearing. Comments will also be accepted via an online comment form at the website listed below. All comments or questions regarding the Draft EIR should be addressed to:

Seana Gause, Program & Project Analyst  
Sonoma County Transportation Authority  
490 Mendocino Avenue  
Santa Rosa, CA 95401  
<http://www.sctainfo.org/feedback.asp>  
Email: [sgause@sctainfo.org](mailto:sgause@sctainfo.org)

### RESPONSE TO COMMENTS/FINAL EIR

Following the public review period, a Final EIR will be prepared. The Final EIR will respond to written comments received during the public review period and to oral comments made at any public hearing(s).

### CERTIFICATION OF THE EIR/PROJECT CONSIDERATION

As the final decision-maker regarding the 2009 CTP, the SCTA Board of Directors will review and consider the Final EIR. If the Board finds that the Final EIR is "adequate and complete," the Board will certify the Final EIR.

Following certification of the Final EIR and following a staff recommendation on the proposed 2009 CTP, the SCTA Board of Directors may take action to adopt, revise, or reject the 2009 CTP. A decision to approve the project would be accompanied by written findings in accordance with CEQA Guidelines Section 15091 and Section 15093 and would explain the 2009 CTP's relationship to alternatives considered in this EIR. A Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program (MMRP), as described below, would also be adopted for mitigation measures that have been incorporated into or imposed upon the project to reduce or avoid significant effects on the environment. This MMRP will be designed to ensure that these measures are carried out during CTP implementation.

### MITIGATION MONITORING

Public Resources Code Section 21081.6(a) requires lead agencies to adopt a reporting and mitigation monitoring program to describe measures that have been adopted or made a condition of project approval in order to mitigate or avoid significant effects on the environment. The specific "reporting or monitoring" program required by CEQA is not required to be included in the EIR; however it will be presented to the SCTA Board of Directors for adoption. Throughout the Draft EIR, however, mitigation measures have been clearly identified and presented in language that will facilitate establishment of a monitoring and reporting program.

## 2.7 EIR APPROACH

### LEVEL OF ANALYSIS

This Program EIR analyzes the collective impact of the CTP's plans and projects on the Sonoma County region for a number of environmental issue areas. All subsequent project-specific environmental documents will need to verify the information provided.

For each issue area, criteria of significance are established, based on normally accepted standards for environmental review and State CEQA guidelines. Impacts are individually numbered within each issue area and are classified as follows based on the assessment of the impact before applying mitigation:

## 2.0 INTRODUCTION AND STUDY APPROACH

---

**Significant and unavoidable:** cannot be mitigated to a level that is less than significant;

**Significant and mitigable:** can be mitigated to a level that is less than significant;

**Less than significant:** does not exceed the significance criteria or threshold; or

**Beneficial:** a positive impact or effect, relative to the current environmental conditions.

Pursuant to the CEQA Guidelines, the scope of this Draft EIR includes specific issues and concerns identified as potentially significant physical effects on the environment. Based on both CEQA Guidelines Appendix G and the NOP comments, this Draft EIR addresses the following topics in depth, with examples of some key questions that will be addressed:

- Aesthetics
  - Will the CTP's projects block panoramic views, create substantial light or glare, or alter the appearance of scenic highways?
- Air Quality
  - Will implementing the CTP's projects and programs be consistent with the Bay Area AQMD's efforts to achieve ozone standards? Will the CTP affect the attainment status of air quality in the North Coast Air Basin?
- Traffic and Circulation
  - Will growth in Sonoma County substantially increase vehicle activity, congestion, or delay, despite the CTP's transportation investments?
- Biological Resources
  - Will implementation of CTP projects substantially affect habitats, movement of species, or native plants?
- Cultural Resources
  - Will the CTP affect historic, archaeological, or paleontological resources in Sonoma County, an area rich with such cultural resources?
- Geology and Soils
  - Given Sonoma County's seismic, geologic, and soils profile, will the CTP's projects expose travelers to injury or death?
- Hazards and Hazardous Materials
  - Will the CTP's projects increase the public's exposure to hazardous materials from roadway incidents?
- Hydrology and Water Quality
  - Will implementation of the CTP substantially affect water quality through increased runoff from new roads and expose people to increased flood risks?

- Land Use and Agricultural Resources
  - Will CTP projects convert farmland or divide existing communities?
- Noise
  - How will the construction and operation of the CTP's transportation projects and programs impact noise levels in communities throughout Sonoma County?
- Population, Housing, and Employment
  - How could the CTP's accommodation of local general plans affect the growth and distribution of population and jobs? Would construction of CTP projects require demolition of existing homes, businesses, or other resources?
- Public Services
  - Would the construction of transportation projects affect local public services such as fire response times?
- Energy
  - How will the CTP affect Sonoma County's direct and indirect use of nonrenewable fuels and other energy demand due to vehicle and other related transportation uses?

### 2.8 PROJECT ALTERNATIVES

Section 15126(d) of the State CEQA Guidelines requires that an EIR describe a reasonable range of alternatives to the project or to the location of the project that could feasibly accomplish the basic objectives of the project, and to evaluate the comparative merits of the alternatives.

Because the final content of the 2009 CTP will not be known until the SCTA Board of Directors receives and considers public input on the draft CTP, this Draft EIR considers five alternatives to the project that are intended to bracket policies and impacts associated with the proposed 2009 CTP. These alternatives are evaluated at a qualitative level of detail and are summarized below (the reader is referred to Section 3.0, Overview of the 2009 Comprehensive Transportation Plan, for a detailed description of these alternatives).

- **Alternative 1: No Project/No Action Alternative** – This alternative assumes that all reasonably foreseeable projects and programs (i.e., projects that are fully funded, programmed, and/or have cleared the environmental phase) from the adopted 2004 CTP and 2009 Regional Transportation Improvement Program are implemented, but that all other projects and programs do not proceed forward.
- **Alternative 2: CTP Vision Scenario, Financially Unconstrained Capital Improvement Scenario** – This scenario assumes the entire list of possible proposed CTP projects, including all transportation projects and programs included in the project, are added to the transportation system independent of financial constraints.

## 2.0 INTRODUCTION AND STUDY APPROACH

---

- **Alternative 3: VMT Reduction – Transit Expansion/Smart Growth Focused Scenario** – This alternative assumes that future transportation policy and improvements are focused on land use change and accompanying transit expansion to reduce vehicle miles traveled (VMT). It includes implementation of all capital highway improvements included in the project.
- **Alternative 4: VMT Reduction – Pricing Policy Focused Scenario** – This alternative focuses on using pricing measures and policy as a means of reducing travel demand and trip reduction. It includes the same capital highway and transit improvements and growth assumptions as the project.
- **Alternative 5: Comprehensive/“Do Everything” Scenario** – This scenario includes the entire list of possible proposed CTP projects independent of financial constraints and all previously identified measures to reduce VMT (Smart Growth-related land use changes and pricing measures).

These five alternatives create a reasonable range of feasible alternatives that meet CEQA's requirements while allowing SCTA decision-makers the flexibility to adopt any variation of projects and programs. If any changes to the project or alternatives are ultimately desired, the environmental analysis from all five alternatives effectively brackets potential environmental impacts.

### 2.9 APPROVALS FOR WHICH THE EIR WILL BE USED

This Draft EIR is being prepared to meet the requirements of CEQA and allow the SCTA to consider adoption of the Draft 2009 CTP. As such, this Draft EIR should not be used for the approval of individual projects included in the CTP, though it can be referenced and used for informational purposes to help streamline future environmental analyses of CTP projects and programs.

### 2.10 COMMENTS RECEIVED ON THE NOTICE OF PREPARATION

The SCTA received several comments and letters on the Notice of Preparation for the 2009 Comprehensive Transportation Plan Draft EIR. A copy of each letter is provided in **Appendix A** of this Draft EIR. The SCTA received letters and verbal comments from the following federal, state, and local agencies, and other interested parties.

- San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission
- Lytton Rancherias (Native American Tribe)
- Regional Water Quality Control Board
- California Department of Transportation
- California Department of Toxic Substance Control
- Federal Emergency Management Agency
- Native American Heritage Commission
- California Public Utilities Commission
- Sonoma County Permit and Resource Management Department
- Santa Rosa City Bus

The following summarizes the CEQA-related concerns in these letters and comments:

- Program EIR should include low impact development strategies that reduce CTP project impacts to water.

## 2.0 INTRODUCTION AND STUDY APPROACH

---

- The plan and subsequent projects should be fully surveyed for archaeological resources and if warranted additional testing and assessment should be performed.
- Any water areas that are affected will have to be replaced per executive order. Post construction best management practices (BMPs) should be included in the EIR to reduce impacts.
- Analysis should include data on CTP traffic impacts and reveal the percentage of project trips assigned to state highways. Consider pedestrian, bicycle, and transit performance and impacts. Mitigation measures should include funding, scheduling, monitoring, etc.
- Investigation into current and past hazardous material sights to assess if they have been released where grading is proposed. Identify any local standards that may be exceeded by excavation, transportation impacts from removal and remedial activities, and risk of public upset if site accident occurs.
- Review effective flood insurance rate maps for Sonoma County and describe the minimum basic floodplain management construction and building requirements which should be addressed if any project areas are identified in these maps.
- Assess and mitigate project-related impacts to archeological resources.
- Projects proposed near rail corridors should be planned for safety.