

3.0 COMMENTS AND RESPONSES TO COMMENTS ON THE DRAFT EIR

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This section of the Final EIR includes copies of comments (letters, e-mails, and hearing transcripts) received during the public comment period on the Draft EIR, along with written responses to those comments. All submittals have been assigned a letter or number code as shown in the list of commenters provided in Section 3.2, below. Individual commenters seeking responses to their comments should use the list provided to identify the alphabetical or numerical code assigned to their comments and then proceed to that place in the document. The California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) requires that responses be provided to substantive comments on the environmental analysis

No new significant environmental impacts or issues, beyond those already covered in the Draft EIR (DEIR) for the 2009 Comprehensive Transportation Plan (CTP), were raised during the comment period, and the Sonoma County Transportation Authority, acting as lead agency, directed the preparation of responses to the Draft EIR comments presented herein. Responses to comments received during the comment period do not involve any new significant impacts or "significant new information" that would require recirculation of the Draft EIR pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15088.5.

3.2 LIST OF COMMENTERS

The following individuals and representatives of organizations and agencies submitted written comments on the Draft EIR.

Letter	Individual or Signatory	Affiliation	Date
A	Lisa Carboni	Department of Transportation	June 4, 2009
B	John Short	California Regional Water Quality Control Board	June 1, 2009
C	Terry Roberts	Governor's Office of Planning and Research	June 8, 2009
D	Alex Lee	Department of Toxic Substances Control	May 27, 2009
E	Brenda L. Tomaras	Lytton Rancheria of California	June 19, 2009
F	Nancy Adams	City of Santa Rosa Public Works Department	June 23, 2009
G	Joanne Parker	Santa Rosa City Bus	June 23, 2009
H	Michael G. Rea	West County Transportation	May 18, 2009
I	Peter Chamberlin	Town of Windsor	June 17, 2009
J	Vincent Marengo	City of Petaluma	June 18, 2009
1	Steve Birdlebough	Sierra Club	June 22, 2009
2	Ann Hancock, Christine Culver, Willard Richards	Climate Protection Campaign , Bicycle Coalition Sonoma County Transportation and Land Use Coalition	June 22, 2009
3	David Schonbrunn	Transportation Solutions Defense and Education Fund	June 20, 2009
4	Grace C. Schulman	EarthKeeping Ministry	June 23, 2009
5	Jenny Bard, Shan Magnuson	American Lung Association, Sonoma County Asthma Coalition	June 15, 2009

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Letter	Individual or Signatory	Affiliation	Date
6	Various	May 13 Public Meeting, 3:00 to 4:30	May 13, 2009
7	Various	May 13 Public Meeting, 5:30 to 7:00	May 13, 2009
8	Robert B. Tanner	Citizen	May 13, 2009
9	Willard Richards	Citizen	June 8, 2009

3.3 APPROACH AND FORMAT TO COMMENTS AND RESPONSES

State CEQA Guidelines 15088 requires that lead agencies evaluate all comments on environmental issues received on the Draft EIR and prepare written responses. The written response must address the significant environmental issue raised and must provide a detailed response, especially when specific comments or suggestions (e.g., additional mitigation measures) are not accepted. In addition, the written response must be a good faith and reasoned analysis. However, lead agencies need only to respond to significant environmental issues associated with the project and do not need to provide all the information requested by commenters, as long as a good faith effort at full disclosure is made in the EIR (State CEQA Guidelines 15204).

State CEQA Guidelines 15204 recommends that commenters focus on the sufficiency of the Draft EIR in identifying and analyzing the possible impacts on the environment and ways in which the significant effects of the project might be avoided or mitigated. State CEQA Guidelines 15204 also notes that commenters should provide an explanation and evidence supporting their comments. Pursuant to State CEQA Guidelines 15064, suggested physical effects on the environment shall not be considered significant in the absence of substantial evidence.

State CEQA Guidelines 15088 also recommends that where response to comments results in revisions to the Draft EIR, those revisions be noted as a revision to the Draft EIR or in a separate section of the Final EIR.

Several comment letters included similar comments on issues associated with the project and the Draft EIR. In order to streamline the Final EIR, master responses have been prepared for these similar comments and address the following issue areas:

- DEIR Process and Review Period
- Jurisdiction and role of SCTA
- Commitment of Funds
- Program EIR / Level of Detail
- Climate Change and Greenhouse Gas Emission Impacts
- Adequacy of Alternatives Analysis

Following the master responses, written comments on the Draft EIR are reproduced, along with responses to those comments. To assist in referencing comments and responses, the following coding system is used:

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Public agency comment letters are coded by letters and each issue raised in the comment letter is assigned a number (e.g., Comment Letter A, comment 1: A-1).

Individual and interest group comment letters are coded by numbers and each issue raised in the comment letter is assigned a number (e.g., Comment Letter 1, comment 1: 1-1).

Where changes to the Draft EIR text result from responding to comments, those changes are included in the response and demarcated with revision marks (underline for new text, ~~strike-out~~ for deleted text). Comment-initiated text revisions to the Draft EIR and minor staff-initiated changes are also provided and are demarcated with revision marks in Section 4.0, Minor Revisions to the Draft EIR, of the Final EIR.

3.4 MASTER RESPONSES

3.4.1 DEIR PROCESS AND REVIEW PERIOD

CEQA requires a public review period of at least 45 days for a DEIR that is submitted to the State Clearinghouse for review by state agencies (Pub. Res. Code, Section 21091). The CEQA Guidelines clarify that the public review period for a Draft EIR should not be longer than 60 days “except for unusual circumstances” (State CEQA Guidelines Section 15105(a)). In recognition of the size of the Draft EIR (658 pages) and the expressed desire of a number of public interest groups to review the DEIR in detail, the review period was extended for an additional 21 days to June 23, 2009, for a total review period of 66 days.

3.4.2 JURISDICTION AND ROLE OF SCTA

A number of comment letters question why the proposed 2009 CTP includes policies and that encourage or support, rather than compel, certain actions. In many instances, the comments urge the SCTA to adopt actions and/or mitigation measures in the Draft EIR that will accomplish the intended purpose of a particular policy or environmental benefit (e.g., greenhouse gas emission reductions) that is not within the scope of the SCTA’s authority. The proposed 2009 CTP contains goals, objectives, and policies that establish future SCTA policy regarding many different issues and problems related to transportation planning. These goals, objectives, and policies will guide future SCTA, County and city decision makers regarding transportation projects and programs and land use matters. However, the SCTA does not control or have jurisdiction over many of the decisions that affect and are affected by its future planning. For example, state agencies make decisions about future transportation funding for transit. Local governments (i.e., Sonoma County and the associated cities) control land use decisions and parking mechanisms through their general plans, zoning and development requirements. The federal and state governments can address fuel standards and provide incentives for technological improvements. As a result of these and other jurisdictional factors, many of the proposed 2009 CTP goals, objectives, and policies reflect these limitations on the SCTA’s authority and provide guidance for other agencies in making their decisions. Where the SCTA does not have the decision making authority to require or mandate a policy or mitigation measure, terms such as “encourage”, “support”, or “request” are utilized in order to properly reflect the scope of the SCTA’s jurisdictional authority and the SCTA’s intent that the policy be implemented by the appropriate jurisdiction.

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The Draft EIR analyzes the 2009 CTP objectives, policies and strategic projects and proposes mitigation measures to reduce potentially significant impacts to below a level of significance. In certain instances the SCTA is limited within to its jurisdictional authority and may not be able to act upon or implement suggested actions and measures outside of its scope. The Draft EIR is required to recommend mitigation measures to address physical environmental impacts that can be feasibly implemented. This is consistent with CEQA's definition of "feasible":

"Feasible" means capable of being accomplished in a successful manner within a reasonable period of time, taking into account economic, environmental, legal, social, and technological factors. (State CEQA Guidelines Section 15364)

The SCTA describes Goals, Objectives and Policies in the proposed 2009 CTP that were developed through an extensive public outreach process described in the Public Outreach Report (Appendix B) of the proposed 2009 CTP. In addition, performance measures, or benchmarks were used to assess the modeling scenarios. Development of the performance targets is described in Appendix C. Research & Technical Documents v.i. Sonoma County Travel Model Update & Analysis of the proposed 2009 CTP.

SCTA approval of the objectives for the proposed 2009 CTP does not constitute a legal mandate, nor do they constitute thresholds of significance under CEQA. CEQA does not require thresholds of significance to be the same as the proposed plan's performance objectives.

This said, SCTA takes the Goals, Objectives and Policies of the proposed 2009 CTP very seriously. The Goals are as follows.

- Maintain the System
- Relieve Congestion
- Reduce Emissions
- Plan for Safety & Health
- Specifically, the proposed 2009 CTP strives to
- Improve Countywide PCI to 80 by 2035, with a minimum road PCI of 70 by 2035.
- Reduce person hours of delay 20% below today's levels (2005) by 2035.
- Reduce GHG emissions to 25% below 1990 levels by 2015, and 40% below 1990 levels by 2035.
- Increase safety by minimizing traffic related injuries and fatalities and emphasize health aspects of transportation planning strategies.

These are ambitious goals, which SCTA endeavors to meet through the improvements named in the proposed 2009 CTP. The total cost of these projects is many times greater the funding available, though SCTA includes projects and programs that may be eligible for any, as yet unidentified, funding that may become available in the future. In addition, though the SCTA will promote these goals by whatever means it can, some of the solutions are beyond SCTA's authority (e.g. fuel standards, roadway pricing). In these cases SCTA will fulfill its role by vigorously advocating to the proper authorities.

3.4.3 COMMITMENT OF FUNDS

Commenters have suggested shifting funds between projects to better support currently unfunded projects that could further reduce the plan's environmental impacts, for example, by lowering VMT. Such an option is generally difficult, if not impossible, as regional, state and federal requirements often specify certain funds must be spent on certain types of projects.

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For projects that include voter-approved transportation funds (Measure M, Proposition 1B, etc.) the ability to shift funds to other projects is extremely limited, as the expenditure plans for the ballot measures approved by the voters committed the funds to certain projects or classes of projects. A substantial change in the way funds are allocated among projects identified in the expenditure plan would thwart the will of the voters.

Passed by the voters in November 2004, the Traffic Relief Act for Sonoma County (Measure M) funds the HOV lane on Hwy 101, specific road and bicycle projects, maintenance, bus transit and the Sonoma Marin Rail Transit (SMART). The Act provides for a ¼ cent sales tax to fund the specific programs and projects detailed in the Expenditure Plan. Measure M received more than the required two-thirds vote.

The Measure M expenditure plan, once adopted by the voters, cannot be modified by the SCTA except to account for unexpected revenues or to take into consideration unforeseen circumstances (see Pub. Util. Code, § 180207). Similarly, the Proposition 1B Corridor Mobility Improvement Account (CMIA) funds specific types of projects, as determined by the voters and the California Transportation Commission. CMIA funding was awarded to eligible congestion reducing projects across the State, including construction of the HOV lane on Highway 101 in Sonoma County. SCTA does not have the authority to reassign those funds to another project, and if the project does not progress, funding will be reassigned by the state to another similar project elsewhere in California.

In addition to fund source limitations, the list of projects included in Measure M and the proposed 2009 CTP reflects local priorities largely in place since the 2001 Countywide Transportation Plan was developed in concert with the local governments of Sonoma County and with extensive public input. The SCTA accepts local priorities as foremost in planning and programming for all modes of transportation.

Many transportation projects require extensive planning and coordination of a variety of fund sources. Abrupt change of priorities and abandonment of projects would result in the loss of the investment and sunk costs and delays in delivery increase costs.

3.4.4 PROGRAM EIR / LEVEL OF DETAIL

Many comment letters question the level of detail and scope of analysis of the DEIR. Others request that the DEIR add more detailed analysis of the impacts of specific projects. As stated in the Introduction Section of the DEIR (Section 2.0, Introduction and Study Approach), the DEIR is a Program EIR under Section 15168 of the CEQA Guidelines and evaluates the environmental impacts of the proposed project on a general level rather than a project-specific level (see DEIR pages 2.0-1 through -3).

CEQA and the State CEQA Guidelines set out the different circumstances in which Program EIRs and Project EIRs are appropriate. (See Pub. Res. Code, Sections 21068.5, 21093.) Under Section 15168 of the State CEQA Guidelines, a Program EIR is an EIR which may be prepared on a series of actions that can be characterized as one large project and are related ... in connection with issuance of rules, regulations, plans, or other general criteria to govern the conduct of a continuing program. The State CEQA Guidelines list some of the advantages of a Program EIR, including that it allows the Lead Agency to "consider broad policy alternatives and programwide mitigation measures at an early time when the agency has greater flexibility to deal with basic problems or cumulative impacts. . . ." (CEQA Guidelines, Section 15168[b][4])

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The most common type of EIR is a Project EIR, which examines the environmental impacts of a site-specific development project. A program level analysis for a transportation plan, on the other hand, considers the future land uses and transportation projects and programs that may occur over the lifetime of the plan. The program level analysis assesses the cumulative and associated long range impacts of those projects and programs. One of the primary purposes of a Program EIR is to ensure consideration of cumulative impacts that might be overlooked in a case-by-case analysis (see CEQA Guidelines, Section 15168[b]). Thus, the Program EIR provides a framework within which future and more detailed planning for the future specific projects may be reviewed, and identifies areas that may require additional site-specific environmental analysis at subsequent stages of project implementation. State CEQA Guidelines Section 15146 acknowledges that an EIR on a construction project will necessarily be more detailed in the specific effects of the project than will be an EIR on the adoption of a plan because the effects of the construction can be predicted with greater accuracy.

When a Program EIR has been prepared and certified and a subsequent activity in the program or plan is proposed for development, the activity is examined to determine whether an additional environmental document must be prepared. (CEQA Guidelines, § 15168(c).) If an agency finds that no new effects could occur or no new mitigation measures would be required, the agency may approve the activity as being within the scope of the Program EIR, and no new environmental document would be required. (CEQA Guidelines, § 15168(c)(2).) The Program EIR can be used to simplify the subsequent environmental review for later activities in the program, for example by incorporating relevant analysis from the Program EIR by reference and by focusing the subsequent document on effects which had not been considered before. (CEQA Guidelines, § 15168(d).)

The proposed 2009 CTP EIR may serve as a “first tier” CEQA document (Pub. Res. Code, Section 21093; State CEQA Guidelines Section 15152). First tier documents are general in scope and typically discuss broad environmental issues that affect a large geographic area, such as an entire county. Mitigation measures and alternatives are also correspondingly more general in nature than typical mitigation measures and alternatives for a specific development project. Subsequent environmental reviews are narrower in scope and address site specific details. First tier documents are appropriate for long range planning documents, while project level reviews typically address specific project impacts. In preparing a first tier EIR, such as for a transportation plan, the lead agency must still identify the reasonably foreseeable significant environmental impacts of the proposed plan and may not defer analysis to a later tier document (State CEQA Guidelines Section 15152[b]). However, the level of detail in a first tier EIR need not be greater than the level of detail in the plan being analyzed. (Ibid.)

Cumulative impacts are described in Section 5.0 (Cumulative Impacts) of the DEIR. As noted in that section, with respect to the cumulative impacts of transportation projects and programs that could occur under the proposed 2009 CTP, the geographic area of concern is primarily Sonoma County, although the DEIR considers regional effects of counties adjoining Sonoma County (see DEIR page 5.0-2). Consistent with CEQA, the discussion of cumulative impacts is guided by standards of practicality and reasonableness.

3.4.5 CLIMATE CHANGE AND GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSION IMPACTS

Several comment letters expressed concerns about the climate change and greenhouse gas emission impacts associated with implementation of the CTP, specifically:

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- Conflict between proposed CTP Policy 3 and the Sonoma County Community Climate Action Plan and the greenhouse gas emission estimates and analysis conclusions for year 2035 identified in the Draft EIR.
- Need to better address increases in vehicle miles traveled and associated increases in energy use.
- Need for the Draft EIR and the proposed CTP to provide additional mitigation measures/provisions to further mitigate increases in greenhouse gas emissions consistent with the Sonoma County Community Climate Action Plan and other recommended measures from comment letters.

The discussion bellows responds to these issue points regarding climate change and greenhouse gas emissions.

It is important to recognize that the Draft EIR identifies the proposed 2009 CTP would result in reduced greenhouse gas emissions than what occurred under year 2005 conditions (see Draft EIR pages 5.0-21 through -24). An improved circumstance in the existing environment is not considered a significant environmental impact under CEQA. Specifically, State CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.2 identify that significant environmental effects are determined by changes caused by a project on the existing physical conditions of the environment. In this circumstance, greenhouse gas emissions will be less with implementation of the 2009 CTP in year 2035 than they were in 2005. Thus, the greenhouse gas beneficial impact determination in the Draft EIR is accurate and consistent with the requirements and intent of CEQA.

Conflicts with Proposed CTP Policy 3 and Sonoma County Community Climate Action Plan

Comment letters received by SCTA expressed concern that information in the Draft EIR demonstrates that the proposed CTP would not meet CTP Policy 3 that is based on the Sonoma County Community Climate Action Plan's (SCCCAP) target of reducing County emissions 25% below 1990 emission levels (1.4 million ton reduction). Proposed CTP Policy 3 specifically states:

Goal: Meet the targets to reduce GHG emissions 25% below 1990 levels by 2015, and 40% below 1990 levels by 2035 by working with government agencies and the public.

See Chapter 4 – Vision for the Future in the proposed 2009 CTP for more information about the Goals, Objectives and Policies.

While the proposed 2009 CTP has identified its desired intent of meeting this greenhouse gas (GHG) emission reduction target through a variety of measures, including transit, roadway improvements, land use improvement (smart growth and supportive transit), transportation technology improvements and transportation pricing policies, current funding and SCTA authority limitations inhibit the CTP's ability to fully implement these strategic projects (see CTP pages 95 through 99) and thus meet its benchmarks (including GHG emission reductions) (see CTP page 50). The environmental impact analysis in the Draft EIR is conservatively based on projects and improvements that are feasible for SCTA to implement and have known existing and planned funding sources (e.g., Measure M and funding from the Metropolitan Transportation Commission) (see CTP page 35 and Draft EIR pages 3.0-10 through -13). The reader is referred to the discussion below under "Need for the Draft EIR to Include Additional Mitigation Measures to Further Mitigate Greenhouse Gas Emissions" regarding the infeasibility of SCTA to fully implement these measures and other measures suggested by the commenters.

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It should be noted that Section 6.0 (Alternatives) of the Draft EIR does provide an analysis that shows VMT reductions that could further reduce GHG emissions (as compared to the proposed CTP) associated with a 7% reduction in VMT under Alternative 3, 11% reduction in VMT under Alternative 4, and 18% reduction in VMT under Alternative 5. Each of these alternatives includes aspects of the CTP strategic projects such as smart growth and transit expansion, congestion pricing, and a combination of both (see Section 4.0, Minor Revisions to DEIR Appendix F). Alternative 5 is the only Alternative that meets the GHG reduction emissions goals, however there are programs contained within the Alternative 5 that are outside of the jurisdiction of the SCTA and are financially unfeasible and are not able to be implemented as part of the 2009 CTP.

While the Draft EIR acknowledges that the CTP would not fully meet the GHG emission reduction targets set forth in CTP Policy 3 or the SCCCAP target, the proposed CTP would improve county-wide mobile GHG emissions by approximately 22% from existing conditions (2005) through improved VMT under year 2035 conditions (with the 2009 CTP) as well as through expected improvements in fuel economy from implementation of AB 1493. In addition, the CTP includes SCCCAP solutions as both CTP objectives (see CTP pages 43 through 49) as well as strategic projects (see CTP pages 95 through 99). Thus, the CTP does not conflict with the SCCCAP. It should be noted that in the SCCCAP itself notes that, some of its transportation and land use solutions are expected to have varied levels of feasibility to implement and would require other agencies beyond SCTA to implement to meet the target (see SCCCAP pages 41 through 44). Given that the proposed CTP would improve on existing mobile GHG emissions as well as anticipated GHG emissions under year 2035 no CTP update conditions, no significant climate change impact was identified in the Draft EIR.

The proposed CTP would also be generally consistent with the land use and transportation and programs to reduce VMT recommendations identified in the California Governor's Office of Planning and Research technical advisory entitled "CEQA and Climate Change: Addressing Climate Change Through California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Review" (June 2008). While not a general plan, the proposed CTP is also generally consistent with the recommended transportation, VMT reduction, transit improvement and pedestrian and bicycle policies identified in the California Air Pollution Control Officer Association's "Model Policies for Greenhouse Gases in General Plans" (June 2009).

Need to Better Address Vehicle Miles Traveled and Energy Use Increases

Comment letters identify the following issues associated with the Draft EIR analysis of energy use and GHG emission estimates for year 2035:

- Inconsistency with the analyses and conclusions associated with increases in VMT, energy consumption, and GHG emissions provided in Draft EIR pages 4.13-10 through -15 and 5.0-20 through -25. Specifically, that VMT is expected to increase and fuel economy is expected to increase yet the Draft EIR identifies an increase in fuel consumption
- The Draft EIR identifies that the proposed CTP would not meet CTP Objective 3A that calls for the reduction of VMT by 10% below year 2005 levels by 2035.

The Draft EIR's analysis of future energy consumption for year 2035 under the proposed CTP and Draft EIR alternatives has been revised and corrections to this analysis is provided in Section 4.0, (Minor Revisions to the Draft EIR). Specifically, the analysis now includes consideration of the federal CAFE and State fuel economy standards under AB 1491 (Pavley). There is a 22%

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reduction in fuel consumption for light duty autos and trucks, as they are the vehicle classes that are subject to federal CAFE and State fuel economy standards under AB 1491. However, the 26% increase in VMT results in concomitant increases in fuel consumption in the other vehicle classes that are not affected by AB 1491. Overall, the vehicle fleet's fuel consumption of gasoline and diesel fuels is projected to be reduced by 9% under the 2035 CTP scenario when compared to existing conditions (2005). Draft EIR Table 4.13-2, Table 4.13-3 and the analysis in the Executive Summary, Energy section, and Cumulative Impacts sections of the Draft EIR have been revised accordingly (see Section 4.0, Minor Revisions to the Draft EIR). This updated analysis has resulted in a change in the significance determination of Draft EIR Impact 4.13-1 from significant and unavoidable to less than significant.

The Draft EIR's analysis of future VMT is based on output from the Sonoma County Travel model which uses regional population and employment forecasts for Sonoma County and the Bay Area region. The Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG) is responsible for making long-term forecasts of population, housing, and employment, and updates forecasts every 2 years. ABAG forecasts present a realistic assessment of growth in the region, while recognizing trends in markets and demographics, and accounting for local general plans and planning documents. The advent of legislation that seeks to address and reduce Greenhouse Gas emissions, such as SB 375, will impact future county and regional population and employment forecasts. SB 375 directs the California Air Resources Board to set regional targets for reducing GHG emissions and requires Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs – the Metropolitan Transportation Commission is the MPO for the nine county Bay Area region) to develop Sustainable Communities Strategies (SCS) (or a feasible alternative planning strategy) to meet those targets. Decisions relating to the allocation of transportation funding must be consistent with the region's SCS. An SCS is essentially an outline for regional transportation infrastructure and development that will reduce GHG emissions from cars and light trucks. Future county and regional forecasts will most likely shift future population and employment growth to more urbanized parts of the region at higher densities and clustered around transit and in walkable communities. SCS forecasts for Sonoma County will likely be similar to the land use scenario analyzed as part of 2009 CTP EIR Scenario 3 (Smart Growth Scenario). As described in the 2009 CTP by 2035, the population of Sonoma County that is 65 or older will go from 13.4% to 27.6% of the total population. Due to these changes, SCS land use allocations will also likely show lower population and growth rates for Sonoma County, which will subsequently lead to lower future VMT and GHG growth and make it easier for SCS to meet VMT and GHG reduction goals. SCS is active in monitoring the initial stages of SB 375 implementation and is engaged at the regional level in the development of the SCS.

The analysis of the CTP is based on ABAG's Projections 2007 (initial Projections 2005 estimates were updated using Projections 2007 once available), which were the published regional forecasts for the region during the development of the CTP and testing of scenarios. Population and Job growth numbers and associated VMT data for Sonoma County are shown below:

	Population	Jobs	VMT
2005	478,800	220,460	11,441,811
2035	568,900	344,290	14,417,956
% change	18.8%	56.2%	26%

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The reader will note that growth in VMT is greater than projected population growth for Sonoma County. VMT is a function of population, employment, and the location of travel destinations. High projected job growth and the expected expansion of Santa Rosa Junior College and Sonoma State University enrollments by 2035 contribute to increased travel in the county and lead to a VMT growth that outpaces the projected population increase for Sonoma County. As discussed above, the Sonoma County population is also projected to continue to age which could also increase the need for out of county in-commuting to fulfill employment needs. Thus, the increase in VMT reflects increased commuting and school trips within the county and higher in-commutes (and higher education school trips) from surrounding counties.

The Draft EIR analysis acknowledges that although the proposed 2009 CTP has an objective goal to reduce VMT per capita by 10% below 2005 levels by 2035, VMT is anticipated to increase by approximately 26% over existing conditions. As identified above, the 2009 CTP proposes to meet the VMT reduction target through transit, roadway improvements, land use improvements (smart growth and supportive transit), transportation technology improvements and transportation pricing policies. However, current funding and SCTA authority limitations inhibit the CTP's ability to fully implement these strategic projects (see CTP pages 95 through 99) to meet this VMT reduction (see CTP page 50). Thus, the environmental impact analysis in the Draft EIR is conservatively based on projects and improvements that are feasible for SCTA to implement and have known existing and planned funding sources (see CTP page 35 and Draft EIR pages 3.0-10 through -13).

VMT increases identified in Draft EIR Table 4.3-15 (see Draft EIR page 4.3-29) for year 2035 are based on continued growth and land uses in the County and its cities associated with their general plans (growth as projected by ABAG in Projections 2007) that will continue to generate traffic and impact VMT that SCTA has no authority to regulate, though the proposed CTP does include recommended land use measures under its strategic projects list that encourage and promote clustered and infill development (see CTP pages 96 and 97). Future land use forecasts (Sustainable Communities Strategy) based on SB 375 requirements will also provide a future land use scenario that will make it more likely that VMT and GHG reduction targets will be met. The purpose of the CTP is provide long range planning that seeks to improve mobility via Sonoma County's streets, highways, transit system and bicycle/pedestrian facilities, as well as to reduce transportation-related impacts. As demonstrated in Draft EIR Table 4.3-15, the proposed CTP would result in an improvement in VMT as compared to no project under year 2035 conditions.

Need for the Draft EIR to Include Additional Mitigation Measures to Further Mitigate Greenhouse Gas Emissions

Comment letters suggest additional mitigation measures to address climate change. As explained in the Draft EIR, implementation of the CTP would not result in a significant climate change or greenhouse gas emission impact and therefore mitigation is not required (see Draft EIR pages 5.0-20 through -26). Nevertheless, the Draft EIR recommends additional mitigation measures (MM 5.0-1a through g, MM 5.0-2a, and MM 5.0-3) that would further reduce potential impacts of climate change, beyond what is required under CEQA.

Mitigation measures (MM 5.0-1a through g, MM 5.0-2a, and MM 5.0-3) are presented below:

MM 5.0-1a SCTA shall consider working in partnership with the Bay Area Air Quality Management District to conduct demonstration projects in Sonoma County that help reduce GHG emissions. This would help implement Bay Area Ozone Strategy TCM-17.

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- MM 5.0-1b** SCTA shall work in partnership with appropriate stakeholders (e.g., Bay Area Air Quality Management District, Sonoma County Alliance, Leadership Institute for the Ecology and the Economy) to develop public information campaigns to educate residents, merchants, and the traveling public about transportation strategies that can help reduce GHG emissions.
- MM 5.0-1c** SCTA shall encourage project sponsors to design transportation-related improvements such as transit buildings and facilities to be certified by the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design program (LEED).
- MM 5.0-1d** SCTA shall work with local governments to limit idling time for commercial vehicles, including delivery and construction vehicles.
- MM 5.0-1e** SCTA shall work with project sponsors to develop standards for construction management, including use of recycled materials or low-carbon products.
- MM 5.0-1f** SCTA shall work with MTC, BCDC, and other partners to address vulnerability of the county's transportation infrastructure and appropriate adaptation strategies to protect those transportation resources that are likely to be impacted by sea level rise and flooding associated with global climate change. Examples could include, but not be limited to:
- Engineering designs for new transportation projects shall demonstrate that they have factored in sea level rise and potential increases in storm surge inundation, and are budgeting for and already incorporating mitigation measures to adapt to projected sea level rise and storm surge. These mitigation measures should consider the effects on Bay and coastal zone resources and avoid or reduce risk to the infrastructure and the region.
 - For transportation projects that increase the capacity of existing infrastructure, project sponsors shall demonstrate they have investigated the vulnerability of their existing facilities to sea level rise and potential increases in storm surge inundation, and are budgeting for and already incorporating mitigation measures to adapt to projected sea level rise and storm surge. These mitigation measures should consider the effects on Bay and coastal zone resources and avoid or reduce risk to the infrastructure and the region.
- MM 5.0-1g** Where applicable, project sponsors for subsequent projects under the 2009 CTP shall include mitigation measures to reduce impacts related to significant storm events, sea level rise, and flooding resulting from global climate change.
- MM 5.0-2a** SCTA shall work with the BAAQMD and other appropriate stakeholders to develop guidance and/or requirements to use low-carbon emitting techniques or equipment in the construction process for capital improvements included in the 2009 CTP.
- MM 5.0-3** SCTA shall work with appropriate stakeholders to provide funding for ~~ensure~~ ~~that~~ future transportation plans and projects are consistent with AB 32 implementation standards and guidelines once they are developed.

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The following is a summary of additional mitigation measures suggested by commenters to be considered in the EIR. Below each suggested mitigation measure is an analysis of the measure.

- *Make the full costs of automobile use transparent to drivers (education and transportation pricing such as paid parking, mileage-based insurance, HOT lanes, and additional gas taxes).*

As previously identified above, the proposed CTP includes Objective 2D and pricing strategies and actions in its strategic projects list that includes HOT lanes, charging for parking at activity centers, congestion pricing, and support for increases in gas tax or user fees (see CTP page 97 and 98). However, all of those projects with the exception of charging parking at activity centers, would require the passage of special legislation by the State and are not under the authority of SCTA to implement. Implementation of Draft EIR mitigation measure MM 5.0-1b requires SCTA to coordinate with other stakeholders in public information campaigns to educate the public about transportation strategies that can help reduce GHG emissions. Thus, the CTP and Draft EIR already include this mitigation approach to the extent feasible at this time.

- *Expansion of hybrid, electric and other alternative fuel vehicle use.*

The proposed CTP includes programs and policies that address the comment via Objective 3E, which supports development and deployment of new technologies to reduce transportation emissions and "Traffic Flow Improvement" strategies/actions in its strategic projects list. These strategies/actions include increase in fuel efficiencies, improved fuels/biofuels, and acceleration of school bus replacement (see CTP page 98 and 99). SCTA is committed to supporting these important strategies; however, as identified in the CTP, much of the implementation of these strategies and actions depends on action by the state and federal government (e.g., fuel efficiency legislation and the private sector and the availability of future funding). Thus, the CTP already includes this mitigation approach to the extent feasible.

- *Further expansion of public transportation and improve its convenience associated with land uses and other forms of transportation.*

The proposed CTP includes projects and policies that address the comment via transit improvements associated with Sonoma-Marin Area Rail Transit (SMART) passenger rail project (30-minute headways during peak periods and 60-minute headways off-peak), increased frequencies on Santa Rosa CityBus, Mendocino Avenue/Santa Rosa Avenue Rapid Bus, and Montgomery/Sonoma/West Santa Rosa Rapid Bus. CTP also includes pedestrian and bicycle improvements as well as traffic safety and safe routes for school projects. The CTP also includes "Land Use Measures" strategies and actions in its strategic projects list that includes clustering development near transit hubs and development of transportation investment criteria that support the 4-d Development Strategy (density, diversity, design, destinations).

- *Changes in land use patterns and other features to make it easier to live without a car.*

As identified above, the proposed CTP includes transit, pedestrian and bicycle improvements. In addition, the CTP includes land use strategies and actions in its strategic projects list associated with clustered and mixed-use development. Although SCTA does not have land use authority to implement clustered development, the

projects and policies in the CTP support other jurisdictions in making transit-oriented development a priority.

- *Improvement of pedestrian and bicycle facilities and safety.*

As identified above, the proposed CTP already includes pedestrian and bicycle improvements as well as traffic safety and safe routes for school projects.

- *Implementation of traffic calming measures.*

The CTP includes Policy 4 and objectives 4A and 4B that address traffic safety and public health, and pedestrian and bicycle improvements as well as traffic safety and safe routes for school projects. The CTP also includes "Traffic Flow Improvement" strategies and actions in its strategic projects list that includes traffic circles and other traffic calming measures (see CTP page 98). Many jurisdictions have implemented traffic calming measures to meet their particular local needs and the CTP supports continuation of these efforts.

3.4.6 ADEQUACY OF ALTERNATIVES ANALYSIS

Some comment letters expressed concerns associated with the alternatives analysis and suggested additional alternatives to be evaluated. Specific comments included:

- Inadequate analysis of the No Project Alternative in the Draft EIR.
- Need for the Draft EIR to consider additional alternatives including:
 - A variation of Alternative 3 that transfers funding from capacity improvements of the Marin-Sonoma Narrows to SMART and other transit and the market-based pricing concepts of Alternative 4 to reduce travel demand (referred to hereafter as "Alternative 6"); and,
 - An alternative that would involve a 20% reduction in vehicle miles traveled (referred to hereafter as "Alternative 7");

CEQA Requirements for a Range of Reasonable Alternatives in an EIR

State CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.6(a) states that an environmental impact report (EIR) shall describe and analyze a range of reasonable alternatives to a project. The range of alternatives required in an EIR is governed by a "rule of reason" that requires the EIR to set forth only those alternatives necessary to permit a reasoned choice (State CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.6[f]). Alternatives to be considered are limited to ones that would avoid or substantially lessen any of the significant effects of the project and at the same time feasibly attain most of the basic objectives of the project.

When addressing feasibility, the State CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.6(f)(1) states that among the factors that may be taken into account when addressing the feasibility of alternatives are economic viability, availability of infrastructure, jurisdictional boundaries, and regulatory limitations. In addition to these provisions, State CEQA Guidelines Section 15364 defines feasible as:

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capable of being accomplished in a successful manner within a reasonable period of time, taking into account economic, environmental, legal, social, and technological factors. (See also Citizens of Goleta Valley, et al. v. Board of Supervisors of the County of Santa Barbara, et al.)

An EIR need not consider every conceivable alternative to a project, nor is it required to consider alternatives that are infeasible. (See *Sequoyah Hills Homeowners Association v. City of Oakland* (1994) 23 Cal.App.4th 704)

Development of Range of Alternatives

The alternatives evaluated in the Draft EIR are based on the scenarios evaluated in the proposed CTP (see CTP Appendix C, vi. Sonoma County Travel Model Update & Analysis). These scenarios were developed to consider a range of actions associated with the prioritization of transportation projects and policies to determine what types of projects and policies would provide SCTA the greatest ability to feasibly meeting its goals and objectives, which includes improvement of environmental conditions. The following alternatives were evaluated in the DEIR. A detailed description of these alternatives is provided in Section 6.0 (Project Alternatives), while an updated list of projects under each alternative is provided in Section 4.0 of this document in the edits to DEIR Appendix G.

1. No Project/No Action
2. CTP Vision Scenario, Financially Unconstrained Capital Improvement Scenario
3. VMT Reduction – Transit Expansion/Smart Growth Focused Scenario
4. VMT Reduction – Pricing Policy Focused Scenario
5. Comprehensive – “Do Everything” Scenario

These alternatives were identified as potentially meeting the basic objectives of the proposed CTP, which are included in Chapter 3.0, Overview of the 2009 Comprehensive Transportation Plan, of the Draft EIR.

Inadequate Analysis of No Project Alternative

Commenters suggest that the No Project Alternative was incorrectly defined and should have been defined as the existing transportation network as it would function with 2035 population and land use. However, this is contrary to State CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.6(e)(3)(A) which specifically identifies that in the case of the revision of an existing land use or regulatory plan, policy or ongoing operation, the "no project" alternative will be the continuation of the existing plan, policy or operation into the future. The No Project Alternative includes projects included in the 2004 CTP that are fully funded (see Draft EIR page 6.0-2). As discussed in Section 6.0 of the DEIR, if the 2009 CTP is not approved, SCTA would continue to rely on the existing CTP until such time as a revised CTP were adopted. The existing 2004 CTP contains most of the same proposed large projects that are included in the current Draft CTP. The specific projects included in the No Project Alternative are:

- U.S. 101: Wilfred - Rohnert Park Expressway to Santa Rosa Avenue – Add one HOV lane in each direction; add a two-lane connector road between Wilfred Avenue and Santa Rosa Avenue; add auxiliary lanes between Rohnert Park Expressway overcrossing and

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Wilfred Avenue/Golf Course Drive interchange; add auxiliary lane between Wilfred Avenue and Santa Rosa Avenue overcrossing; and realign surrounding roadways.

- U.S. 101: North - Windsor River Road to Steele Lane (Phase A) – Add one HOV lane in each direction.
- U.S. 101: Central - Rohnert Park Expressway to Old Redwood Highway (Phase A) – Add one HOV lane in each direction between Pepper Road and Rohnert Park Expressway; add northbound climbing lane from one mile north of Old Redwood Highway to West Sierra Avenue; add auxiliary lanes between Pepper Road and Rohnert Park Expressway.
- U.S. 101: Marin-Sonoma Narrows (Phase 1) – Upgrade Petaluma Boulevard South interchange and frontage roads; close expressway access.

Consideration of a no project alternative based on no changes to the existing transportation network with year 2035 population and land use, as urged by some commenters, would fail to consider approved, planned and funded transportation improvements (i.e., reasonably foreseeable projects) expected to be complete by the year 2035 (e.g., Phase 1 of the Marin Sonoma Narrows Project). The Draft EIR No Project Alternative includes these expected transportation improvements, consistent with CEQA Guidelines section 151526.6.

The commenters appear to confuse the definition of environmental baseline under CEQA (State CEQA Guidelines Section 15125[a]) and the requirements of the no project alternatives analysis (State CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.6[e]). Section 15125[a] of the State CEQA Guidelines requires that an environmental impact report [EIR] include a description of the physical environmental conditions in the vicinity of a project as they exist at the time the Notice of Preparation (NOP) is published and the environmental analysis is begun. The State CEQA Guidelines also specify that this description of the physical environmental conditions is to normally serve as the baseline physical conditions by which a lead agency determines whether impacts of a project are considered significant, as was done in the DEIR. This differs from the evaluation of the no project alternative under Section 15126.6 of the State CEQA Guidelines, which assumes that “other projects initiated under the existing plan will continue while the new plan is developed.” (State CEQA Guidelines, § 15126.6(e)(3)(A).) The impacts that would occur under the existing plan, including projects that “would be reasonably expected to occur in the foreseeable future if the project were not approved,” are then compared to the projected impacts of the proposed plan. (State CEQA Guidelines, § 15126.6(e)(2), (3).)

As previously identified above, the definition of a no project alternative under Section 15126.6(e) substantially differs from environmental baseline conditions as it requires the consideration of the subsequent activities that would reasonably occur if the CTP update project were not approved. In the case of the Draft 2009 CTP, SCTA would continue to operate under the 2004 CTP and transportation projects that are planned and funded would move forward as noted above.

Consideration of Alternatives Suggested

Suggested Alternative 6, proposed by TRANSDEF, is a variation of Alternative 3 that would transfer funding from capacity improvements of the Highway 101 Marin-Sonoma Narrows Project to SMART and other transit to maximize transit availability, and include the market-based pricing concepts of Alternative 4 to reduce travel demand. As described, this alternative is substantially a combination of Alternatives 3 and 4 already analyzed in the DEIR, with the difference that it would shift funding from highway widening to transit. This alternative would not be feasible

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given that programmed funding for the Marin-Sonoma Narrows Project has been allocated by the California Transportation Commission from the Corridor Mobility Improvement Account for highway improvements, and if it were deprogrammed from the Highway 101 project, it would return to the state; it would not be available to program to rail improvements. Changes to the Measure M funding allocated to the Marin-Sonoma Narrows Project would require voter approval to amend Measure M.

Suggested Alternative 7, proposed by the Climate Action Campaign, Bicycle Coalition and Sonoma County Transportation and Land Use Coalition, proposes a 20% reduction in vehicle miles traveled. However, the comment does not specify additional transportation improvements or policies, beyond those identified in the 2009 CTP and the DEIR, that could be implemented to ensure a 20% reduction in VMT. Thus, it is impossible to determine how such an alternative could be feasibly implemented by SCTA. For purposes of comparison, it should be noted that the Draft EIR includes Alternative 5 (Comprehensive/"Do Everything" Alternative), which would achieve a 20% reduction in VMT compared to no project conditions in year 2035.