

5.0 OTHER CEQA CONSIDERATIONS

5.1 Summary of Cumulative Impacts

5.1.1 Approach to the Analysis

CEQA defines cumulative impacts as “two or more individual effects which when considered together are considerable” and notes that cumulative impacts may “result from individually minor, but collectively significant projects taking place over a period of time (CEQA Guidelines Section 15355). CEQA documents are required to include a discussion of potential significant cumulative effects using one of the two following methods:

- The list based approach that considers a list of past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future projects to assess the potential for creating related or cumulative impacts; and
- The projections-based approach that uses a summary of growth projections contained in an adopted general plan or related planning document to evaluate regional or areawide conditions.

This EIR uses the first approach, in which a list of planned and approved development projects within the study area of West Sacramento and Sacramento is examined to determine possible cumulative effects of these projects in combination with the proposed project on the study area. The list of projects is presented in Table 4-1. A cumulative impact of the project results if the proposed project contributes considerable effects on the future No-Project Alternative. For several impact topics analyzed, the No-Project Alternative produces significant cumulative impacts, as indicated in the section below. The contribution of the Streetcar Project Alternative to those cumulative effects of the No-Project Alternative is analyzed in Chapter 4 and summarized below.

5.1.2 Comparison of No-Project Alternative and Streetcar Project Alternative Cumulative Impacts

The No-Project Alternative has future cumulative traffic impacts that are unavoidable on the approach roads to the Tower Bridge. The increased traffic is due to regional growth and induced growth resulting from development projects in the study area. After 2020, increased traffic may produce peak period stop-and-go conditions crossing the Tower Bridge. In addition, traffic noise will contribute to unacceptable cumulative noise levels in portions of the study area along the proposed alignment. In contrast, the Streetcar Project Alternative does not substantially contribute to increased traffic and noise levels or induce growth. Rather, the proposed project removes a small percentage of automobile trips across Tower Bridge and supports the region’s goals to limit the increase in overall vehicle miles traveled and to decrease pollutant emissions. As traffic increases over the long term, it is possible that a single-track streetcar alignment may contribute to delays expected on the Tower Bridge, but the contribution would be less than significant. In addition, the streetcar would not add to unacceptable cumulative ambient noise levels along the alignment (WIA, 2008).

5.2 Growth-Inducing Impacts

CEQA requires environmental documents to include an evaluation of growth-inducing impacts. CEQA Guidelines Section 15126(d) states that environmental documents must:

“Discuss the ways in which the proposed project could foster economic or population growth, or the construction of additional housing, either directly or indirectly, in the surrounding environment. Included in this are projects that would remove obstacles to population growth (a major expansion of a wastewater treatment plant might, for example, allow for more construction in service areas). Increases in the population may tax existing community service facilities, requiring construction of new facilities that could cause significant environmental effects. Also discuss the characteristic of some projects that may encourage and facilitate other activities that could significantly affect the environment, either individually or cumulatively. It must not be assumed that growth in any area is necessarily beneficial, detrimental, or of little significance to the environment.”

This provides the framework for a discussion of potential growth-inducing impacts, as follows:

- Would the proposed project foster economic or population growth, or the construction of additional housing?
- Would the proposed project remove obstacles to population growth?
- Would the proposed project result in a population increase that may tax existing community service facilities, requiring construction of new facilities?
- Would the proposed project encourage and facilitate other activities that could significantly affect the environment, either individually or cumulatively?

5.2.1 Economic and Population Growth

Because of the large available workforce within Sacramento and Yolo counties, the majority of construction and operational workers will be hired from within the region, and they will not have to relocate for project construction or operation. Transit stations associated with the proposed project would increase foot traffic and provide new economic development opportunities, which may indirectly increase employment opportunities in the area. It is anticipated that the majority of these jobs would be filled by residents of Sacramento and Yolo counties. Therefore, the proposed project would not directly or indirectly induce substantial population growth in the area, because the majority of workers would not need to relocate (see Section 4.2, Population and Housing).

In some circumstances, people may move into areas due to a perceived increase in the quality of life afforded by an increase in transit service. However, as discussed in Section 4.2, Population and Housing, and Section 4.1, Land Use and Planning, existing development plans for the study area provide for significant residential, commercial, civic, and cultural land use development. In this instance, growth is likely to occur because of these previously planned developments, and will occur regardless of the proposed project. The proposed project would better provide for this growth, a potentially beneficial impact. For these reasons, project construction and operations would not foster substantial economic or population growth, or the construction of additional housing.

Population increase as a result of the proposed project would not likely be significant relative to the number of people projected to move to the study area by 2035 (see Section 3.2, Population and Housing). The proposed project may reduce potential impacts associated with this growth by improving transit service and reducing automobiles trips.

5.2.2 Remove Obstacles to Growth

A project may also be growth-inducing if it removes an impediment to growth through the construction of infrastructure or the provision of additional public services. These growth constraints may include utilities, roadways, and police or fire protection.

The proposed project would require electrical services for operational activities. However, the proposed project is located in developed areas of Sacramento and West Sacramento with adequate electricity infrastructure and capacity, and connections to existing infrastructure can be readily provided (see Section 4.14, Utilities and Energy). This would not induce growth because electricity infrastructure is readily available in the study area and is not a constraint on growth.

The proposed project is not anticipated to significantly increase the demand for local public services, including emergency medical transport, and police and fire protection. These local public services adequately serve the study area and no increase in capacity would be needed to accommodate the proposed project (see Section 4.4, Public Services).

5.2.3 Require Construction of New Facilities

As indicated above, the proposed project is not anticipated to result in significant population growth and therefore would not require the construction of new community service facilities, such as schools, libraries, or parks (see Section 4.2, Population and Housing; Section 4.3, Recreation and Parklands; and Section 4.4, Public Services).

5.2.4 Encourage and Facilitate Other Activities

Because of the aforementioned reasons, the proposed project is not anticipated to significantly contribute to economic or population growth, or require construction of infrastructure or the provision of additional public services that would be growth-inducing (see Section 4.2, Population and Housing; Section 4.4, Public Services; Section 4.14, Utilities and Energy).

5.3 Summary of Unavoidable Impacts

The No-Project Alternative will produce unavoidable impacts on traffic circulation and noise levels as traffic volumes increase on study area roads. Of particular concern are the long-term circulation impacts on Tower Bridge and the unacceptable future ambient noise levels on sensitive receptors along the alignment. As indicated in Chapter 4, the Streetcar Project Alternative produces construction, operation and cumulative impacts that can be reduced to a less than significant level. The Streetcar Project Alternative produces no unavoidable impacts.

5.4 Significant Irreversible Environmental Changes

CEQA calls for a discussion of the uses of non-renewable resources during the initial and continued phases of the proposed project when those uses could be irreversible because of a commitment of resources that make removal or non-use of the resource unlikely thereafter. Implementation of the

proposed project would involve the use of some non-renewable resources. Materials (such as fossil fuels and lubricants) and energy would be consumed during project construction and operation. However, by accommodating a greater number of trips on transit in the future, the project would provide for a more efficient use of fossil fuels than if these trips were to use private automobiles.

5.5 Alternatives Analysis and Selecting the Environmentally Superior Alternative

5.5.1 Phase 1 Alternatives Analysis Summary

As indicated in Chapter 2, multiple modal alternatives were examined to provide transit service between West Sacramento and downtown Sacramento as part of the Phase 1 Feasibility Study. Rubber-tired alternatives, such as diesel buses, shuttles, and motorized cable cars, were eliminated due to the additional air pollutants generated, the increased reliance on fossil fuel propulsion, and the use of congested traffic lanes. By adding to the increased traffic volumes, bus and shuttle transit would become a contributor to cumulative traffic impacts and ambient noise increases. In addition, rubber-tired transit would not fulfill West Sacramento Redevelopment goals for transit oriented development as well as rail. The Phase 1 study examined the extension of light rail from Sacramento into West Sacramento. Although fulfilling City of West Sacramento redevelopment goals and having many of the same attributes as streetcar, light rail is more expensive, in terms of capital and operating costs. It would also be a more intrusive mode to operate in the narrow rights of way on K Street east of 12th Street and on 13th Street. Nonetheless, light rail, having larger cars, would more readily provide capacity to meet future demand. In light of these findings, the Phase 1 study concluded that the streetcar mode was the most feasible and environmentally sound to carry forward into Phase 2 and that the streetcar track and catenary system should be designed to accommodate future light rail operation to Raley Field on event days, when additional carrying capacity is required.

5.5.2 Environmentally Superior Alternative

In the EIR, the Streetcar Project Alternative is compared with the No-Project Alternative to determine which would be the Environmentally Superior Alternative. As indicated in Chapter 4 and Sections 5.1, 5.2, and 5.3, the Streetcar Project Alternative is the Environmentally Superior Alternative for the following reasons:

- **Land Use:** The Streetcar Project Alternative supports the City of West Sacramento's redevelopment goals of encouraging development near transit stops.
- **Employment:** The Streetcar Project Alternative would create construction and operations jobs without creating added demand for housing, because the regional labor pool could fulfill the employment requirements of the proposed project.
- **Transportation:** In contrast to the No-Project Alternative, which produces cumulative traffic impacts on study area roads, particularly on the approach roads to the Tower Bridge, the Streetcar Project Alternative would reduce automobile trips over the Tower Bridge over the long term and, as a result, help the cities overcome cumulative traffic congestion and circulation problems on the approach roads to the Tower Bridge.

- **Parks and Recreation:** The Streetcar Project Alternative would improve access to parklands along the Sacramento River and in the area surrounding the Capitol and connect them with neighborhoods along the alignment.
- **Air Quality:** By shifting some automobile trips to transit, the Streetcar Project Alternative would support regional air quality goals to reduce vehicle miles traveled.
- **Noise:** Noise levels along the proposed alignment are forecasted to exceed local thresholds over the planning horizon under the No-Project Alternative. Sensitive receptors along the alignment may be subjected to unacceptable future ambient noise levels due to the increased traffic volumes on the major streets that contain the alignment. Unlike the No-Project Alternative, the Streetcar Project Alternative does not make a considerable contribution to unacceptable cumulative noise levels. Mitigations are identified that reduce noise and vibrations impacts to a less than significant level.
- **Energy:** The streetcar is a non-polluting, electric-powered vehicle that lessens reliance on fossil fuels. If the proposed project were in operation, an additional 3,134 kWh of annual energy usage, or a 4 percent increase, would be required. This is not considered a substantial increase in energy consumption and represents a very small percentage of electric power generated by SMUD. In addition, trips made on buses and cars between West Sacramento and downtown Sacramento that may be diverted to the streetcar would balance the additional electrical power required for streetcar operation.