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## ALTERNATIVES

### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

The California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA, 1970, as amended, Section 151.26.6) requires an EIR to include a discussion of a reasonable range of alternatives to the proposed project. CEQA also requires that the EIR specifically address a “no project” alternative within this discussion, and that the “environmentally superior” alternative be identified (Section 15126.6 [e]). Where the “no project” alternative identified as the “environmentally superior” alternative, another alternative which would represent the “environmentally superior” alternative in the absence of the “no project” alternative should then be identified.

Three alternatives to the three plans (each “Financially Constrained”) are described and considered in this EIR. In this document, the “No Build” alternative represents a scenario in which no new construction on transportation system improvement projects would take place in the absence of the three plans, although maintenance of the existing transportation infrastructure would continue. The “Financially Unconstrained” alternative represents a more extensive range of transportation system improvements than anticipated under the three plans, since it would encompass all of the transportation system improvement programs and projects identified in the financially constrained Action Elements of the three plans, as well as all of the transportation system improvement programs and projects identified in the Financially Unconstrained Project Lists of the three plans. A third alternative represents the “Financially Constrained” projects that would be listed in the event that new local revenue sources, like funds generated by new local sales tax measures in Monterey and Santa Cruz Counties, do not realize future funding.

It should be recognized that the range of possible alternatives to the three plans is limited only by the human imagination. CEQA does not require the evaluation of all possible alternatives, but does require the evaluation of a range of reasonable alternatives. The alternatives selected by the Lead Agency for evaluation in the EIR were chosen to maintain consistency with the previous evaluation of alternatives presented in previous EIRs on earlier versions of the MTP, MC-RTP and SCC-RTP. The “No Build” alternative was selected because a discussion of the “No Project” alternative is mandated by CEQA, the “Financially Unconstrained” alternative was selected because the specific transportation system improvement projects and programs associated with it can be clearly identified by combining the project listings established in the three plans (see **Appendix B** and **Appendix C**), and the “Financially Constrained.- No New Revenue Sources” alternative was selected to realize the

possibility that future revenues, like sales tax measures in Monterey and Santa Cruz Counties, may not materialize.

In preparing earlier EIRs on their respective Regional Transportation Plans, each of the three Counties evaluated a different range of alternatives:

- The Program EIR on the 2002 Regional Transportation Plan prepared for the Transportation Agency for Monterey County (EMC Planning Group Inc., February 2002) evaluated a financially constrained alternative (since the “Project”, in this instance included all transportation system improvement project identified in the 2002 RTP, regardless of the availability of funding) and a no project alternative (which would continue 1994 RTP policies and projects). This document does not identify a specific alternative as the “environmentally superior” alternative, but indicates that elements of each alternative would be environmentally superior or environmentally inferior to the same elements of the other alternatives.
- The Draft EIR for the San Benito County 2001 Regional Transportation Plan (Denise Duffy & Associates, Inc., December 2001) evaluated a No Project alternative (with none of the transportation policies or improvements identified in the RTP implemented after 2001), two Growth Alternatives (one that would limit growth to the north County area, and another that would consolidate growth around commuter rail stations that might be built between Hollister and the State Route 156 Bypass), and a Reduced Project alternative (which would eliminate new roadway projects identified in the 2001 RTP that would cut through prime farmland). This document indicates that there is no clearly superior alternative that would both avoid environmental impacts and meet the project’s basic objectives.
- The EIR for the 2001 Regional Transportation Plan prepared for the Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission (Rincon Consulting, Inc., October 2001) evaluated an Agency Preferred Alternative (that would involve implementation of financially constrained 2001 RTP projects only, since the “Project”, in this instance included all transportation system improvement projects identified in the 2001 RTP, regardless of the availability of funding), a Modified Project Alternative (which would eliminate individual projects identified in the 2001 RTP that would have unavoidable environmental impacts), a Programmed Project Alternative (under which only currently funded improvements would be completed), and a No Project Alternative (with no new transportation system improvements). The No Project Alternative was identified as “environmentally superior overall, with the Project identified as the superior alternative from the standpoint of addressing countywide traffic and traffic safety issues.

In the Draft Supplemental EIR on the Monterey Bay Area Metropolitan Transportation Plan – 2002, the alternatives evaluated were the “No Build” alternative and the “Financially Unconstrained” alternative, selected by the Lead Agency and its partners.

## 4.2 THE “NO BUILD” ALTERNATIVE

Under the “No Build” alternative, the existing transportation system within the region would be maintained. This alternative would include the implementation of only those programs and projects identified in the financially constrained Action Elements of the three plans that are designed to preserve existing transportation facilities and/or intended to aid in meeting regional transportation needs through more effective use of existing facilities. Such programs and projects are designed to maintain, rehabilitate, restore and replace obsolete or unsafe facilities, but are not intended to increase system capacity or modify service levels and/or operating characteristics (although these effects could possibly result as incidental to such programs and projects). Currently budgeted and scheduled replacement of transit equipment and facilities would occur to maintain existing levels of transit service. Road, bicycle and pedestrian facility rehabilitation and maintenance efforts would continue, and adopted trip reduction and traffic control programs would be put in place. Growth within the region would be consistent with that anticipated in the AMBAG population and employment forecasts and current general plans of local jurisdictions within the Monterey Bay area. The “No Build” alternative assumes that no transportation system improvement programs or projects not already functional (such as new roads, roadway extensions, roadway widenings, expanded transit service or trip reduction strategies or new and/or expanded bicycle/pedestrian facilities) would be initiated. Although the maintenance of the existing transportation system would continue within the limits of existing State, county and city budget frameworks, the construction of additional facilities (e.g., bridge replacements) would generally have to be deferred until warranted by emergency conditions.

### **Aesthetics**

In the absence of any new transportation system improvement projects within the region, the existing visual character of areas which might otherwise be affected by construction associated with such improvements would be maintained undisturbed. No scenic vistas would be affected by this alternative, and no damage to scenic resources would be anticipated. Under the “No Build” alternative, there would be no substantial increase in existing levels of light or glare.

### **Agriculture Resources**

The “No Build” alternative would avoid potential impacts associated with the conversion of land currently in agricultural use to transportation-related uses. No conflicts with existing zoning regulations intended to protect agricultural operations would be anticipated, and no cancellation of active Williamson Act contracts would be required. Providing basic maintenance for the existing transportation system within the region would not be expected to have any adverse effects which could fragment acreage currently in agricultural use or jeopardize the viability of current agricultural operations.

### **Air Quality**

In the absence of any transportation system improvement projects involving significant construction activity, there would be no construction-related air quality impacts associated with the “No Build” alternative. However, with additional population growth within the region, the volume of traffic on the existing transportation system could be expected to increase. In the absence of any increase in existing transportation system capacity, this could be expected to result in increased congestion and potentially significant adverse air quality effects. If congestion at individual intersections were to worsen significantly, it is possible that there could also be a significant increase in carbon monoxide levels in the vicinity of those intersections, which would represent a potentially significant impact associated with the “No Build” alternative.

### **Biological Resources**

With no new construction, there would be no potentially significant effects on habitats, riparian areas/wetlands or wildlife migration corridors under the “No Build” alternative. There would be no risk of conflict with local policies or ordinances intended to protect biological resources, or with any habitat conservation plans.

### **Cultural Resources**

The “No Build” alternative would not place any cultural resources at risk, since it would generally provide for the maintenance of the existing transportation system, and would not entail new construction in areas where archaeological, paleontological or historical resources could be found.

### **Geology and Soils**

With no new construction proposed under this alternative, there would be no increased risk of exposure to geologic hazards such as earthquake fault rupture, strong seismic shaking, seismic-related ground failures or landslides. Under the “No Build” alternative, no new structures would be built on soils identified as unstable. Although some erosion might result from routine transportation system maintenance, this would be minimal when compared to the erosion which would be associated with major construction projects.

### **Hazards and Hazardous Materials**

The “No Build” alternative would not be expected to result in any significant increase in the existing risk of exposure to hazardous materials within the region, and there would be no construction of any transportation system improvements on sites where hazardous materials might be present. Although no new roadway projects would entail the potential for increasing safety hazards through flawed design, existing safety hazards associated with the current roadway network would not be corrected under this alternative. Implementation of the “No Build” alternative would not result in any interference with existing emergency response plans or emergency evacuation plans, and would

have no effect on the existing level of wildland fire hazards in those portions of the region which are currently exposed to such hazards.

### **Hydrology and Water Quality**

There would be no anticipated changes in current drainage and groundwater recharge patterns under the “No Build” alternative, since existing structures and facilities would be maintained in place, and no additional demand for landscape irrigation would be anticipated. In the absence of major construction activity, this alternative would not be expected to result in any violation of existing water quality standards. No new structures would be placed within a 100-year flood hazard area or any areas that might be subject to tsunami, and there would be no anticipated increase in flood hazards within the region which could be attributed to this alternative.

### **Land Use and Planning**

The “No Build” alternative would result in very limited changes in existing land use patterns, but in the absence of new transportation system improvement projects, circulation within the Monterey Bay region could be expected to become increasingly constrained. This alternative would essentially be inconsistent with the existing General Plans of each of the three Counties within the region, since transportation deficiencies which have been identified in these Plans would not be remedied. Since the “No Build” alternative would not result in the implementation of projects or programs which have been identified in the Regional Transportation Plans of the three Counties, it would be inconsistent with all of them. With no major construction activity proposed, this alternative would not be expected to result in the physical division of any established community. Although no new conflicts with existing land uses would be anticipated under the “No Build” alternative, no new transportation system improvement projects that might have the potential to reduce existing land use conflicts would be initiated.

### **Mineral Resources**

There would be no anticipated effects on mineral resources within the region under the “No Build” alternative.

### **Noise**

In the absence of major construction activity under the “No Build” alternative, there would be no significant construction-related noise or vibration impacts. Although the volume of traffic on some roadway segments within the region could be expected to increase, the related increase in noise levels would generally not be expected to be considered significant. There would be no anticipated change in the noise levels associated with rail operations or aviation facilities under this alternative, since no rail or aviation system improvements intended to expand existing facilities would be made.

## **Population and Housing**

The “No Build” alternative would not increase transportation system capacity, and would not induce any population growth within the region, either directly or indirectly. Since it would not involve any major new construction, this alternative would not be expected to displace any people, existing housing units or existing businesses.

## **Public Services**

With the maintenance of the existing regional transportation system and no projects to increase system capacity, there would be no increase in demand for public services resulting from implementation of the “No Build” alternative. In the absence of construction activity, there would not be any anticipated impacts related to temporary access obstructions at schools, parks or recreational facilities under this alternative. Under this alternative, the level of effort required to maintain the existing transportation system could be expected to increase somewhat as the use of the existing facilities increases in the absence of any capacity increase in the system.

## **Recreation**

While the “No Build” alternative would not have any significant adverse effects on existing parks and recreational facilities within the region, the absence of any new transportation improvement projects would eliminate the possibility of enhancing transportation-related recreational opportunities for area residents (i.e., through the construction of new or expanded bicycle routes or pedestrian trails).

## **Transportation/Traffic**

Traffic volumes and congestion would be expected to worsen within the region in proportion to anticipated population growth under the “No Build” alternative, exacerbating existing transportation system problems and creating new ones. In the context of cumulative projected residential and employment growth, segments of roadways which currently experience high traffic volumes could be expected to experience substantial additional traffic, which would not be accommodated by any expansion in capacity. The existing discontinuity in bicycle routes would be maintained under the “No Build” alternative, and could limit growth in bicycling as a commute alternative. Under this alternative, no new pedestrian-oriented projects would be completed, transit services would not receive the funding necessary to expand, and there would be no new rail services within the region. Existing aviation facilities would come under greater pressure in the absence of projects intended to improve or expand them, although any shortfalls in aviation services would occur as a result of cumulative population growth within the region, and not directly as a result of the “No Build” alternative.

Under this alternative, in the absence of construction, there would be no temporary diversion of traffic which could increase congestion and no potential interference with emergency access in the vicinity of construction sites. Although no new roadway projects would entail the potential for increasing safety hazards through flawed design, existing safety hazards associated with the current roadway network would not be corrected under this alternative. The “No Build” alternative would not involve the construction of any new transportation system improvement projects where parking demand might be an issue.

### Utilities and Service Systems

The “No Build” alternative would not be expected to result in any significant effects on the existing wastewater treatment capacity, storm drainage systems, water supply systems or solid waste disposal facilities within the region. In the absence of construction activity, this alternative would not be expected to result in any construction-related disruption of utility service.

## 4.3 THE “FINANCIALLY UNCONSTRAINED” ALTERNATIVE

The “Financially Unconstrained” alternative represents all of the transportation system improvement programs and projects that are included in the financially constrained Action Elements of the three plans, whether or not the funding for these programs and project is likely to become available. The transportation system improvements which comprise the “Financially Unconstrained” alternative include all of the programs and projects which were listed in the financially constrained Action Elements of the three plans (see **Appendix B**) and all of the programs and projects identified in the Financially Unconstrained Project Lists of the three plans (see **Appendix C**). The “Financially Unconstrained” alternative supports the goals and strategies of the three plans.

AMBAG, SCCRTC and TAMC recognize that the “Financially Unconstrained” alternative may be desirable, but is economically hypothetical. The “Financially Unconstrained” alternative identifies additional programs and projects which could only be implemented if additional financial resources were to be obtained.

### Aesthetics

With a greater level of construction activity than would be anticipated under the financially constrained Action Elements of the three plans, the “Financially Unconstrained” alternative would entail greater potential to affect scenic vistas, visual resources and visual character within the region adversely, and some projects may entail **significant and unavoidable** impacts even after mitigation. The “Financially Unconstrained” alternative would also be expected to have greater light and glare impacts than those which might be associated with the projects identified in the financially constrained Action Elements of the three plans, although the application of the identified mitigation measures could be expected to reduce these impacts to a level of less than significant.

### **Agriculture Resources**

Completion of all of the transportation system improvement projects associated with the “Financially Unconstrained” alternative would be likely to result in additional, more extensive conversion of land now in agricultural uses to roadways or other transportation uses, relative to the projects associated with the financially constrained Action Elements of the three plans. With an increased number of transportation system improvement projects proposed, this alternative would also entail increased potential for conflicts with existing Williamson Act contracts and zoning intended to protect agricultural lands. The “Financially Unconstrained” alternative would have the potential to fragment more acreage currently in agricultural use and to jeopardize the viability of current agricultural operations to a greater extent than would be expected under the financially constrained Action Elements of the three plans. For some projects, impacts related to agricultural resources could remain **significant and unavoidable** even after the implementation of identified mitigation measures.

### **Air Quality**

With additional transportation system improvement projects proposed under the “Financially Unconstrained” alternative, it is likely that there would be more temporary construction-related air quality impacts anticipated than would be associated with those projects identified in the financially constrained Action Elements of the three plans. Additional roadway improvement projects might increase the likelihood of creating some adverse project-specific carbon monoxide impacts at a local level.

### **Biological Resources**

Although project-specific effects on biological resources would still require evaluation during project-level environmental review, with an increased number of transportation system improvement projects proposed, the “Financially Unconstrained” alternative might be expected to entail increased potentially significant effects on habitats, riparian areas/wetlands and wildlife migration corridors relative to the implementation of those projects identified in the financially constrained Action Elements of the three plans. The larger number of projects proposed under this alternative could also increase the risk of conflict with local policies or ordinances intended to protect biological resources, or conflicts with existing habitat conservation plans. For some projects, impacts related to biological resources could remain **significant and unavoidable** even after the implementation of identified mitigation measures.

### **Cultural Resources**

The increased level of construction associated with this alternative might be expected to have a potentially greater effect on regional archaeological, paleontological and/or historical resources than would be the case with the implementation of the projects identified in the financially constrained

Action Elements of the three plans alone, although implementation of the identified mitigation measures would be expected to reduce these impacts to a level of less than significant.

### **Geology and Soils**

With more transportation system improvement projects to be completed within a region which is already subject to geotechnical hazards, under the “Financially Unconstrained” alternative there might be an increased risk of exposure to geologic hazards such as earthquake fault rupture, strong seismic shaking, seismic-related ground failures or landslides relative to the risk associated with implementation of the projects identified in the financially constrained Action Elements of the three plans. Under this alternative, transportation system improvement projects may be proposed on soils identified as unstable. Increased construction activity could also be expected to result in increased erosion under this alternative. The implementation of the identified mitigation measures would be expected to reduce these impacts to a level of less than significant.

### **Hazards and Hazardous Materials**

The “Financially Unconstrained ” alternative could be expected to result in the construction of transportation system improvement projects on more sites where hazardous materials might be present than would be the case under the financially constrained Action Elements of the three plans. With more roadway projects, the potential for increasing safety hazards through flawed design would also be higher under this alternative. These impacts could be reduced to a level of less than significant through the implementation of the identified mitigation measures. The “Financially Unconstrained” alternative would not result in any interference with existing emergency response plans or emergency evacuation plans, and would not be expected to have any significant effect on the existing level of wildland fire hazards in those portions of the region which are already subject to such hazards.

### **Hydrology and Water Quality**

The “Financially Unconstrained” alternative could be expected to entail greater changes in current drainage and groundwater recharge patterns than those which might be associated with the implementation of the projects identified in the financially constrained Action Elements of the three plans, due to the increased level of construction which would be anticipated. More construction activity could create an increased potential for possible construction-related violations of existing water quality standards relative to implementation of the projects listed in the financially constrained Action Elements of the three plans. For some projects, environmental effects associated with an increase in impervious surfaces may prove **significant and unavoidable**, and there would be more of these projects under the “Financially Unconstrained” alternative than under the financially constrained Action Elements of the three plans. More new structures might be placed within a 100-year flood hazard area or in areas that might be subject to tsunami than under the financially constrained Action Elements of the three plans, and implementation of the some of the projects identified in the “Financially Unconstrained” alternative could also result in an increase in flood

hazards (although both of these impacts could be reduced to a level of less than significant through implementation of the identified mitigation measures).

### **Land Use and Planning**

Implementation of the additional transportation system improvement programs and projects of the “Financially Unconstrained” alternative would result in a regional transportation system with greater capacity and an increased ability to accommodate projected growth and anticipated changes in land use. These additional improvements would be expected to ease traffic congestion in the region to a greater extent that would be possible with the implementation of the projects listed in the financially constrained Action Elements of the three plans. The three plans, with the implementation of the financially constrained Action Element projects, and the “Financially Unconstrained” alternative would basically support the goals and strategies of the three plans, and this alternative would be generally consistent with the General Plans of jurisdictions within the region, with the Congestion Management Plans of the Counties of Monterey and Santa Cruz, and with the Regional Transportation Plans of each of the three counties which make up the Monterey Bay region. Implementation of some of the transportation system improvement projects identified in the “Financially Unconstrained” alternative may divide areas currently supporting agricultural operations, but none would result in the physical division of established residential areas. With more projects, the likelihood of a specific project coming into conflict with local plans, policies and regulations would be greater than anticipated under the financially constrained Action Elements of the three plans. Generally, these potential impacts could be reduced to a level of less than significant through changes in project design. However, for some projects, it may not be possible to make such design and still achieve the project objectives. In these cases, the potential conflict with established plans, policies and regulations could remain **significant and unavoidable**.

### **Mineral Resources**

There would be no anticipated effects on mineral resources within the region under the “Financially Unconstrained” alternative.

### **Noise**

With additional transportation system improvement projects under the “Financially Unconstrained” alternative, there would be more construction-related noise impacts anticipated than would be expected with the implementation of those projects identified in the financially constrained Action Elements of the three plans. Noise levels associated with existing rail and aviation operations/facilities would be expected to deteriorate to some extent under the “Financially Unconstrained” alternative, since a number of projects beyond those listed in the financially constrained Action Elements of the three plans would be implemented to expand existing facilities and/or service. With more roadway and rail construction projects than the financially constrained Action Elements of the three plans, noise levels associated with the projects could be expected to become problematic in more locations. Although specific projects may be able to incorporate noise

reduction measures to reduce these impacts to a level of less than significant, the noise impacts associated with other projects involving road or rail traffic may remain **significant and unavoidable** even after implementation of identified mitigation measures.

### **Population and Housing**

To the extent that transportation system improvements that would increase system capacity may indirectly induce population growth, the “Financially Unconstrained” alternative would be expected to induce more such growth than would implementation of the financially constrained Action Elements of the three plans, because it incorporates a larger number of such projects. With the construction of an increased number of transportation system improvement projects, this alternative might be expected to have a potentially greater chance of displacing people, existing housing units or businesses than would be anticipated with the implementation of the projects identified in the financially constrained Action Elements of the three plans.

### **Public Services**

There would be no increase in demand for public services resulting from implementation of the “Financially Unconstrained” alternative. However, with the construction of an increased number of transportation system improvement projects, this alternative might be expected to have a potentially greater chance of temporarily impeding access to schools, parks and recreational facilities than would be anticipated with the implementation of the projects identified in the financially constrained Action Elements of the three plans. Under this alternative, the level of effort required to maintain an expanded transportation system could be expected to increase beyond what would be required following implementation of the financially constrained Action Elements of the three plans.

### **Recreation**

The “Financially Unconstrained” alternative would not be expected to have any significant adverse effects on existing parks and recreational facilities within the region. With a greater number of transportation system improvement projects than proposed under the financially constrained Action Elements of the three plans, this alternative might be expected to result in enhanced transportation-related recreational opportunities for area residents (i.e., through the construction of additional bicycle routes or pedestrian trails)

### **Transportation/Traffic**

With an increased number of transportation system improvement projects completed within the region, the “Financially Unconstrained” alternative would be expected to provide improved regional transportation and access relative to the implementation of the financially constrained Action Elements of the three plans. This alternative would provide numerous additional opportunities for the public to choose alternatives to the single-occupant vehicle as a mode of transportation, while also providing roadway improvements that would make travel by private automobile more efficient

along a number of roadway segments within the region. Under the “Financially Unconstrained” alternative, additional transit services, rail operations and multimodal transportation improvements would be implemented, and additional investments would be made in improving the region’s aviation facilities to better meet the anticipated demand for general and commercial air transportation. However, the increase in the number of roadway improvement projects associated with this alternative could be expected to result in an increased chance of deteriorations in traffic operations along other roadways in the vicinity of these projects (for some projects, this could ultimately prove to be a **significant and unavoidable** impact), an increased chance that some projects may incorporate design features which could result in a substantial increase in hazards, increases in temporary interruptions of traffic which could impede emergency access, and an increased chance that some projects might not provide sufficient parking capacity to meet anticipated demand. Implementation of the “Financially Unconstrained” alternative would generally be consistent with (and not in conflict with) the adopted policies, plans or programs of jurisdictions within Monterey, San Benito and Santa Cruz counties which support alternative transportation modes.

### **Utilities and Service System**

To the extent that transportation system improvements that would increase system capacity may indirectly induce population growth, the “Financially Unconstrained” alternative would be expected to induce more such growth than would implementation of the financially constrained Action Elements of the three plans, because it incorporates a larger number of such projects. This alternative would not result in any direct increase in the regional demand for additional wastewater treatment, and would not place any significant additional demands on the existing landfill capacity within the region. With more construction than anticipated under the financially constrained Action Elements of the three plans, more projects associated with this alternative could be expected to require project-related irrigation and storm drainage improvements which could entail significant environmental impacts, although implementation of the mitigation measures identified could be expected to reduce these impacts to a level of less than significant. The additional construction activity associated with the “Financially Unconstrained” alternative could also be expected to result in an increased level of temporary disruptions in utility service relative to that anticipated with the implementation of the projects identified in the three plans.

## **4.4 THE “FINANCIALLY CONSTRAINED – NO NEW REVENUES” ALTERNATIVE**

Under this alternative, implementation of a number of listed projects in the financially constrained Action Elements of the three plans would be delayed or postponed indefinitely. Unless additional funding is secured, this alternative would scale back or postpone such projects in Monterey County and Santa Cruz County, including:

- Highway 1 (additional lanes in Sand City/Seaside)
- Highway 1 (addition of truck climbing lane between Rio Road and Carmel Valley Road)
- Highway 156 (widening between Prunedale and Castroville)
- Highway 1 (widening/HOV lanes in Santa Cruz County)

Even without new revenues, the following interchange improvements, local road repairs, and projects to expand bus and rail service within Monterey County and Santa Cruz County would be included in this alternative:

#### Monterey County

- Highway 1 at Salinas Road interchange improvements
- Highway 101 at Airport Boulevard interchange improvements
- Davis Road-Reservation Road corridor widening (Marina to Salinas)
- South County safety improvement on Highway 101
- Highway 68 (operational improvements between Salinas and Monterey)
- Highway 68 west of Highway 1 (lane additions near CHOMP)
- Del Monte Avenue Operational Improvements (City of Monterey)
- Monterey-Salinas Transit capital and operational improvement projects
- Capital and operating costs for new rail services in Monterey County
- King City Grade Crossing and road improvements

#### Santa Cruz County

- Highway 1 bicycle and pedestrian crossings (scaled back)
- Highway 1 Express Bus service (scaled back)
- Park/Ride Lots and Carpool/Alternative transportation programs (scaled back)
- Coastal Bicycle/pedestrian trail (fewer segments)
- Senior and Disabled transportation services (fewer projects)
- Highway 17 safety programs (scaled back)
- Watsonville-Pajaro Junction Rail Station (either not pursued or not completed within MTP/RTP timeframe)
- Local and County transportation improvements (fewer)

While the types of potential environmental impacts associated with this alternative would be identical to those associated with the three plans (which involves implementation of the financially constrained Action Elements, and assumes new revenues will become available), delays in Action Element implementation could be expected to result in fewer major transportation system improvement projects being pursued at any given time in Monterey County and Santa Cruz County during the planning period. This might be expected to result in some reduction in the potential cumulative environmental impacts associated with project-specific construction activity when listed projects would otherwise be expected to be completed simultaneously within the same general areas (e.g., construction-related water quality impacts, construction-related air quality impacts, construction-related noise impacts, etc.). However, any delays in anticipated project completions resulting from funding constraints in the absence of the new revenues could also be expected to result in some delays in obtaining the anticipated traffic congestion relief and related air quality benefits that may be associated with such projects.

### **Aesthetics**

With a somewhat reduced level of construction activity than would be anticipated under the financially constrained Action Elements of the three plans, the “Financially Constrained – No New Revenues” alternative would entail less potential to affect scenic vistas, visual resources and visual character within the region adversely, although some projects may entail **significant and unavoidable** impacts even after mitigation. The “Financially Constrained – No New Revenues” alternative would also be expected to have somewhat fewer light and glare impacts than those which might be associated with the projects identified in the financially constrained Action Elements of the three plans, although the application of the identified mitigation measures could be expected to reduce these impacts to a level of less than significant.

### **Agriculture Resources**

Completion of the transportation system improvement projects associated with the “Financially Constrained – No New Revenues” alternative over the planning period would be likely to result in somewhat less extensive conversion of land now in agricultural uses to roadways or other transportation uses, relative to the projects associated with the financially constrained Action Elements of the three plans. With fewer transportation system improvement projects likely to be completed during the planning period, this alternative might have less potential for conflicts with existing Williamson Act contracts and zoning intended to protect agricultural lands. The “Financially Constrained – No New Revenues” alternative would have the potential to fragment somewhat less acreage currently in agricultural use and to jeopardize the viability of current agricultural operations to a lesser extent than would be expected under the financially constrained Action Elements of the three plans. For some projects, impacts related to agricultural resources could remain **significant and unavoidable** even after the implementation of identified mitigation measures.

## **Air Quality**

With fewer transportation system improvement projects likely to be completed during the planning period under the “Financially Constrained – No New Revenues” alternative, it is likely that there would be somewhat fewer temporary construction-related air quality impacts anticipated than would be associated with those projects identified in the financially constrained Action Elements of the three plans. Delaying or scaling back roadway improvement projects identified in the financially constrained Action Elements of the three plans that are intended to reduce traffic congestions might increase the likelihood of creating some adverse project-specific carbon monoxide impacts at a local level. In addition, with a number of major roadway improvement projects identified in the three plans either postponed or scaled back, traffic congestion along several heavily used corridors in Monterey County (e.g., Highway 156) and Santa Cruz County (e.g., Highway 1) could be expected to worsen over time, which could adversely affect regional air quality.

## **Biological Resources**

Although project-specific effects on biological resources would still require evaluation during project-level environmental review, with fewer transportation system improvement projects likely to be completed during the planning period, the “Financially Constrained – No New Revenues” alternative might be expected to entail fewer potentially significant effects on habitats, riparian areas/wetlands and wildlife migration corridors relative to the implementation of those projects identified in the financially constrained Action Elements of the three plans. The reduced number of projects that might be completed during the planning period under this alternative could also reduce the risk of conflict with local policies or ordinances intended to protect biological resources, or conflicts with existing habitat conservation plans. For some projects, impacts related to biological resources could remain **significant and unavoidable** even after the implementation of identified mitigation measures.

## **Cultural Resources**

The reduced level of construction associated with this alternative might be expected to have a potentially somewhat less effect on regional archaeological, paleontological and/or historical resources than would be the case with the implementation of the projects identified in the financially constrained Action Elements of the three plans during the planning period, although implementation of the identified mitigation measures would be expected to reduce these impacts to a level of less than significant.

## **Geology and Soils**

With fewer transportation system improvement projects likely to be completed within a region which is already subject to geotechnical hazards, under the “Financially Constrained – No New Revenues” alternative there might be a slightly reduced risk of exposure to geologic hazards such as earthquake fault rupture, strong seismic shaking, seismic-related ground failures or landslides relative

to the risk associated with implementation of the projects identified in the financially constrained Action Elements of the three plans. Under this alternative, transportation system improvement projects may be proposed on soils identified as unstable. Reduced construction activity could also be expected to result in reduced erosion under this alternative. The implementation of the identified mitigation measures would be expected to reduce these impacts to a level of less than significant.

### **Hazards and Hazardous Materials**

The “Financially Constrained – No New Revenues” alternative could be expected to result in the construction of transportation system improvement projects on fewer sites where hazardous materials might be present than would be the case under the financially constrained Action Elements of the three plans. With fewer roadway projects to be completed during the planning period, the potential for increasing safety hazards through flawed design would also be reduced under this alternative. These impacts could be reduced to a level of less than significant through the implementation of the identified mitigation measures. The “Financially Constrained – No New Revenues” alternative would not result in any interference with existing emergency response plans or emergency evacuation plans, and would not be expected to have any significant effect on the existing level of wildland fire hazards in those portions of the region which are already subject to such hazards.

### **Hydrology and Water Quality**

The “Financially Constrained – No New Revenues” alternative could be expected to entail fewer changes in current drainage and groundwater recharge patterns than those which might be associated with the implementation of the projects identified in the financially constrained Action Elements of the three plans, due to the reduced level of construction which would be anticipated during the planning period. Reduced construction activity could create a reduced potential for possible construction-related violations of existing water quality standards relative to implementation of the projects listed in the financially constrained Action Elements of the three plans. For some projects, environmental effects associated with an increase in impervious surfaces may prove **significant and unavoidable**, and there would be fewer of these projects completed during the planning period under the “Financially Constrained – No New Revenues” alternative than under the financially constrained Action Elements of the three plans. Fewer new structures might be placed within a 100-year flood hazard area or in areas that might be subject to tsunamis than under the financially constrained Action Elements of the three plans during the planning period, and implementation of some of the projects identified in the “Financially Constrained – No New Revenues” alternative could also result in an increase in flood hazards (although both of these impacts could be reduced to a level of less than significant through implementation of the identified mitigation measures).

## Land Use and Planning

Implementation of fewer transportation system improvement programs and projects under the “Financially Constrained – No New Revenues” alternative would result in a regional transportation system with less capacity and a decreased ability to accommodate projected growth and anticipated changes in land use. The reduction in the improvements to be completed during the planning period would be expected to worsen traffic congestion in the region relative to congestion levels anticipated with the implementation of the projects listed in the financially constrained Action Elements of the three plans. The three plans, with the implementation of the financially constrained Action Element projects, and the “Financially Constrained – No New Revenues” alternative would basically support the goals and strategies of the three plans, and this alternative would be generally consistent with the General Plans of jurisdictions within the region, with the Congestion Management Plans of the Counties of Monterey and Santa Cruz, and with the Regional Transportation Plans of each of the three counties which make up the Monterey Bay region. Implementation of some of the transportation system improvement projects identified in the “Financially Constrained – No New Revenues” alternative may divide areas currently supporting agricultural operations, but none would result in the physical division of established residential areas. With fewer projects to be completed during the planning period, the likelihood of a specific project coming into conflict with local plans, policies and regulations would be less than anticipated under the financially constrained Action Elements of the three plans. Generally, these potential impacts could be reduced to a level of less than significant through changes in project design. However, for some projects, it may not be possible to make such design and still achieve the project objectives. In these cases, the potential conflict with established plans, policies and regulations could remain **significant and unavoidable**.

## Mineral Resources

There would be no anticipated effects on mineral resources within the region under the “Financially Constrained – No New Revenues” alternative.

## Noise

With fewer transportation system improvement projects likely to be completed during the planning period under the “Financially Constrained – No New Revenues” alternative, there would be fewer construction-related noise impacts anticipated than would be expected with the implementation of those projects identified in the financially constrained Action Elements of the three plans. Noise levels associated with existing rail and aviation operations/facilities would be expected to deteriorate to some extent under the “Financially Constrained – No New Revenues” alternative, since a number of projects would be implemented to expand existing facilities and/or service. With fewer roadway and rail construction projects likely to be completed than under the financially constrained Action Elements of the three plans, noise levels associated with the projects might be expected to become problematic in a more limited number of locations. Although specific projects may be able to incorporate noise reduction measures to reduce these impacts to a level of less than significant, the

noise impacts associated with other projects involving road or rail traffic may remain **significant and unavoidable** even after implementation of identified mitigation measures.

### **Population and Housing**

To the extent that transportation system improvements that would increase system capacity may indirectly induce population growth, the “Financially Constrained – No New Revenues” alternative would be expected to induce less such growth than would implementation of the financially constrained Action Elements of the three plans, because it fewer such projects would be completed during the planning period. With the construction of fewer transportation system improvement projects, this alternative might be expected to have a potentially less chance of displacing people, existing housing units or businesses than would be anticipated with the implementation of the projects identified in the financially constrained Action Elements of the three plans.

### **Public Services**

There would be no increase in demand for public services resulting from implementation of the “Financially Constrained – No New Revenues” alternative. However, with the construction of fewer transportation system improvement projects during the planning period, this alternative might be expected to have a potentially smaller chance of temporarily impeding access to schools, parks and recreational facilities than would be anticipated with the implementation of the projects identified in the financially constrained Action Elements of the three plans. Under this alternative, the level of effort required to maintain an expanded transportation system could be expected to decrease relative to what would be required following implementation of the financially constrained Action Elements of the three plans.

### **Recreation**

The “Financially Constrained – No New Revenues” alternative would not be expected to have any significant adverse effects on existing parks and recreational facilities within the region. With a smaller number of transportation system improvement projects expected to be completed during the planning period than proposed under the financially constrained Action Elements of the three plans, this alternative might be expected to result in more limited transportation-related recreational opportunities for area residents (i.e., through a reduction in the number of additional bicycle routes or pedestrian trails that might be completed)

### **Transportation/Traffic**

With fewer transportation system improvement projects to be completed within the region during the planning period, the “Financially Constrained – No New Revenues” alternative would not be expected to provide improved regional transportation and access relative to the implementation of the financially constrained Action Elements of the three plans. This alternative would provide more limited opportunities for the public to choose alternatives to the single-occupant vehicle as a mode

of transportation, while making travel by private automobile less efficient along a number of roadway segments within the region, relative to what could be achieved through implementation of the financially constrained Action Elements of the three plans. Under the “Financially Constrained – No New Revenues” alternative, projects to expand transit services, rail operations and multimodal transportation improvements would be delayed or scaled back. However, the decrease in the number of roadway improvement projects to be completed during the planning period could be expected to result in an decreased chance of deteriorations in traffic operations along other roadways in the vicinity of these projects (for some projects, this could ultimately prove to be a **significant and unavoidable** impact), a decreased chance that some projects may incorporate design features which could result in a substantial increase in hazards, decreases in temporary interruptions of traffic which could impede emergency access, and a decreased chance that some projects might not provide sufficient parking capacity to meet anticipated demand. Implementation of the “Financially Constrained – No New Revenues” alternative would generally be consistent with (and not in conflict with) the adopted policies, plans or programs of jurisdictions within Monterey, San Benito and Santa Cruz counties which support alternative transportation modes.

### **Utilities and Service System**

To the extent that transportation system improvements that would increase system capacity may indirectly induce population growth, the “Financially Constrained – No New Revenues” alternative would be expected to induce less such growth than would implementation of the financially constrained Action Elements of the three plans, because a smaller number of such projects would be completed during the planning period. This alternative would not result in any direct increase in the regional demand for additional wastewater treatment, and would not place any significant additional demands on the existing landfill capacity within the region. With less construction than anticipated under the financially constrained Action Elements of the three plans, fewer projects could be expected to require project-related irrigation and storm drainage improvements which could entail significant environmental impacts, although implementation of the mitigation measures identified could be expected to reduce these impacts to a level of less than significant. The reduction in construction activity associated with the “Financially Constrained – No New Revenues” alternative could also be expected to result in an decreased level of temporary disruptions in utility service relative to that anticipated with the implementation of the projects identified in the three plans.

## **4.5 EVALUATION OF ALTERNATIVES**

In an effort to identify the “environmentally superior” alternative, the potential environmental impacts which may be associated with each of the alternatives have been compared to those associated with the implementation of programs and projects identified in the financially constrained Action Elements of the three plans, below.

## Aesthetics

Under the “No Build” alternative, the existing visual character of areas which might otherwise be adversely affected by construction associated with transportation system improvements listed in the financially constrained Action Elements of the three plans (or with the additional improvements associated with the “Financially Unconstrained” alternative) would be maintained undisturbed. No scenic vistas would be affected by the “No Build” alternative, and no damage to scenic resources would be anticipated. Potentially significant impacts to scenic vistas, scenic resources and/or visual character may be anticipated with the implementation of the three plans and with the construction of the increased number of projects associated with the “Financially Unconstrained” alternative, some of which could remain **significant and unavoidable**. Under the “No Build” alternative, there would be no substantial increase in existing levels of light or glare, but implementation of some of the projects identified in the three plans and the increased number of projects associated with the “Financially Unconstrained” alternative might be expected to result in potentially significant increases in light and glare in some areas unless mitigated. The types and magnitude of potential aesthetic impacts associated with the “Financially Constrained – No New Revenues” alternative could be somewhat less than those associated with the three plans.

## Agriculture Resources

The “No Build” alternative would avoid potential impacts associated with the conversion of land currently in agricultural use to transportation-related uses. Since these impacts are directly related to the extent of new construction, they could be expected to be potentially significant for some of the projects identified in the financially constrained Action Elements of the three plans, and with an increased number of projects, also under the “Financially Unconstrained” alternative. The “No Build” alternative would not be expected to have any adverse effects which could jeopardize the viability of current agricultural operations, but implementation of some of the projects identified in the three plans and the projects associated with the “Financially Unconstrained” alternative could be expected to entail potential impacts of this type. The types and magnitude of potential environmental impacts related to agricultural resources that would be associated with the “Financially Constrained – No New Revenues” alternative could be somewhat less than those associated with the Project.

## Air Quality

In the absence of any transportation system improvement projects involving significant construction activity, there would be no construction-related air quality impacts associated with the “No Build” alternative. Implementation of some of the projects identified in the financially constrained Action Elements of three plans and some projects associated with the “Financially Unconstrained” alternative would entail potentially significant construction-related air quality impacts. With additional population growth within the region, the volume of traffic on the existing transportation system could be expected to increase, which would be expected to result in increased congestion and potentially significant adverse air quality effects under the “No Build” alternative. There would be

none of the potentially significant impacts on local carbon monoxide levels that might be associated with some of the roadway improvement projects identified in the financially constrained Action Elements of the three plans or the “Financially Unconstrained” alternative under the “No Build” alternative. The types and magnitude of potential air quality impacts associated with the “Financially Constrained – No New Revenues” alternative would be the same as those associated with the Project, although there could be some reduction in cumulative construction dust in areas where multiple transportation system improvement projects have been proposed in portions of Monterey County and Santa Cruz County, due to delays in implementing projects identified in the financially constrained Action Elements of the three plans.

### **Biological Resources**

With no new construction, there would be no potentially significant effects on habitats, riparian areas/wetlands or wildlife migration corridors under the “No Build” alternative. Some of the projects associated with implementation of projects identified in the financially constrained Action Elements of the three plans and with the “Financially Unconstrained” alternative could be expected to have potentially significant impacts on habitats, riparian areas/wetlands or wildlife migration corridors (which in some instances could ultimately remain **significant and unavoidable**). There would be no risk of conflict with local policies or ordinances intended to protect biological resources, or with any habitat conservation plans under the “No Build” alternative, but potential impacts of this sort could be anticipated with the implementation of some of the projects identified in the financially constrained Action Elements of the three plans and the “Financially Unconstrained” alternative (and in some instances, could ultimately remain **significant and unavoidable**). The types and magnitude of potential environmental impacts related to biological resources that would be associated with the “Financially Constrained – No New Revenues” alternative could be somewhat less than those associated with the three plans.

### **Cultural Resources**

The “No Build” alternative would not place any cultural resources at risk, and would not entail new construction in areas where archaeological, paleontological or historical resources could be found. The increased level of construction associated with the “Financially Unconstrained” alternative might be expected to have a potentially greater effect on regional archaeological, paleontological and/or historical resources than would be the case with the implementation of the projects identified in the financially constrained Action Elements of the three plans alone, but these impacts could be reduced to a level of less than significant with the implementation of identified mitigation measures. The types and magnitude of potential environmental impacts related to cultural resources that would be associated with the “Financially Constrained – No New Revenues” alternative could be somewhat less than those associated with the three plans.

## Geology and Soils

With no new construction proposed under the “No Build” alternative, there would be no increased risk of exposure to geologic hazards such as earthquake fault rupture, strong seismic shaking, seismic-related ground failures or landslides. Some of the projects identified in the financially constrained Action Elements of the three plans and associated with the “Financially Unconstrained” alternative could be expected to entail increased exposure to geologic hazards of this type, or could involve construction on unstable soil. Although some erosion might result from routine transportation system maintenance under the “No Build” alternative, this would be minimal when compared to the erosion which would be associated with some of the major construction projects identified in the financially constrained Action Elements of the three plans or associated with the “Financially Unconstrained” alternative. The types and magnitude of potential environmental impacts related to geology and soils that would be associated with the “Financially Constrained – No New Revenues” alternative could be somewhat less than those associated with the three plans.

## Hazards and Hazardous Materials

Implementation of the transportation system improvement projects identified in the financially constrained Action Elements of the three plans or associated with the “Financially Unconstrained” alternative could result in exposure to hazardous materials if built in areas where hazardous materials have been identified within the region without mitigation, but no increase in the existing risk level would be anticipated under the “No Build” alternative. With the construction of roadway projects under the “Financially Unconstrained” alternative or with implementation of the financially constrained Action Elements of the three plans, the potential for increasing safety hazards through flawed design would be present. Implementation of the three plans, the “Financially Unconstrained” alternative or the “No Build” alternative would not result in any interference with existing emergency response plans or emergency evacuation plans, and would have no effect on the existing level of wildland fire hazards in those portions of the region which are currently exposed to such hazards. The types and magnitude of potential environmental impacts related to hazards and hazardous materials that would be associated with the “Financially Constrained – No New Revenues” alternative could be somewhat less than those associated with the three plans.

## Hydrology and Water Quality

There would be no anticipated changes in current drainage and groundwater recharge patterns under the “No Build” alternative, but potentially significant changes might be expected with the implementation of some of the projects identified in the financially constrained Action Elements of the three plans or the “Financially Unconstrained” alternative. For some of these projects, an increase in impervious surface area could be identified as a **significant and unavoidable** impact. In the absence of major construction activity, the “No Build” alternative would not be expected to result in any violation of existing water quality standards, but construction associated with implementing some of the projects associated with the three plans and the “Financially Unconstrained” alternative could entail potentially significant water quality impacts unless mitigated.

While no new structures would be placed within a 100-year flood hazard area under the “No Build” alternative, new structures might be placed within a 100-year flood hazard area or in areas that might be subject to tsunami than under the financially constrained Action Elements of the three plans or the “Financially Unconstrained” alternative. Some projects could also result in an increase in flood hazards (although these impacts could be reduced to a level of less than significant through implementation of the identified mitigation measures). The types and magnitude of potential water quality impacts associated with the “Financially Constrained – No New Revenues” alternative would be the same as those associated with the Project, although there could be some reduction in cumulative construction runoff in areas where multiple transportation system improvement projects have been proposed in portions of Monterey County and Santa Cruz County, due to delays in implementing projects identified in the financially constrained Action Elements of the three plans.

### **Land Use and Planning**

The “No Build” alternative would result in very limited changes in existing land use patterns, but in the absence of new transportation system improvement projects, circulation within the Monterey Bay region could be expected to become increasingly constrained. The implementation of the projects identified in the financially constrained Action Elements of the three plans would improve regional circulation, and the increased number of projects associated with the “Financially Unconstrained” alternative would be expected to result in even greater regional circulation improvements. The “No Build” alternative would essentially be inconsistent with the existing General Plans of each of the three Counties within the region, but the three plans and the “Financially Unconstrained” alternative would be generally consistent with the existing land use planning documents in force within the region. With no major construction activity proposed, the “No Build” alternative would not be expected to result in the physical division of any established community. Implementation of some of the transportation system improvement projects identified in the financially constrained Action Elements of the three plans or the “Financially Unconstrained” alternative may divide areas currently supporting agricultural operations, but none would result in the physical division of established residential areas. With the construction of projects, some conflicts with local plans, policies and regulations would be anticipated under either the financially constrained Action Elements of the three plans or the “Financially Unconstrained” alternative. Generally, these potential impacts could be reduced to a level of less than significant through changes in project design. However, for some projects, it may not be possible to make such design and still achieve the project objectives. In these cases, the potential conflict with established plans, policies and regulations could remain **significant and unavoidable**. The types and magnitude of potential environmental impacts related to land use and planning that would be associated with the “Financially Constrained – No New Revenues” alternative could be somewhat less than those associated with the three plans.

## **Mineral Resources**

There would be no anticipated effects on mineral resources within the region under the three plans, the “No Build” alternative, the “Financially Unconstrained” alternative, or the “Financially Constrained – No New Revenues” alternative.

## **Noise**

In the absence of major construction activity under the “No Build” alternative, there would be no significant construction-related noise impacts. Some of the projects listed in the financially constrained Action Elements of the three plans or associated with the “Financially Unconstrained” alternative would be expected to entail significant, temporary noise impacts during construction. Although the volume of traffic on some roadway segments within the region could be expected to increase, under the “No Build” alternative the related increase in noise levels would generally not be expected to be considered significant. Increases in noise levels associated with new roadways or other transportation system improvement projects identified in the financially constrained Action Elements of the three plans or the “Financially Unconstrained” alternative could be expected to represent significant environmental impacts (which, in some instances, could remain **significant and unavoidable**). The types and magnitude of potential noise impacts associated with the “Financially Constrained – No New Revenues” alternative would be the same as those associated with the three plans, although there could be some reduction in cumulative construction noise in areas where multiple transportation system improvement projects have been proposed in portions of Monterey County and Santa Cruz County, due to delays in implementing projects identified in the financially constrained Action Elements of the three plans.

## **Population and Housing**

To the extent that transportation system capacity improvements may indirectly induce population growth, implementation of the three plans, the “Financially Unconstrained” alternative or the “Financially Constrained – No New Revenues” alternative would be expected to induce some population growth within the region. There would be no growth inducement under the “No Build” alternative, and since it would not involve any major new construction, it would not be expected to displace any people or existing housing units (an impact that may be significant for some of the projects identified in the financially constrained Action Elements of the three plans or associated with the “Financially Unconstrained” alternative or the “Financially Constrained – No New Revenues” alternative, unless mitigated).

## **Public Services**

There would be no direct increase in demand for public services resulting from implementation of the three plans, the “No Build” alternative, the “Financially Unconstrained” alternative or the “Financially Constrained – No New Revenues” alternative. However, some of the projects identified in the financially constrained Action Elements of the three plans and associated with the

“Financially Unconstrained” alternative or the “Financially Constrained – No New Revenues” alternative may result in temporary access obstructions at schools, parks or recreational facilities and could require additional resources to maintain an expanded regional transportation system.

### **Recreation**

While the “No Build” alternative would not have any significant adverse effects on existing parks and recreational facilities within the region, the absence of any new transportation improvement projects would eliminate the possibility of enhancing transportation-related recreational opportunities for area residents (i.e., through the construction of new or expanded bicycle routes or pedestrian trails). The implementation of projects identified in the financially constrained Action Elements of the three plans would provide enhanced recreational opportunities within the region without significant adverse effects on existing park and recreational facilities, while the “Financially Unconstrained” alternative, with its increased number of transportation system improvement projects, could be expected to yield even greater recreational benefits for those living within the region. The types and magnitude of potential environmental impacts related to recreation that would be associated with the “Financially Constrained – No New Revenues” alternative could be somewhat less than those associated with the three plans.

### **Transportation/Traffic**

Traffic volumes and congestion would be expected to worsen within the region in proportion to anticipated population growth under the “No Build” alternative, exacerbating existing transportation system problems and creating new ones. Projects identified in the financially constrained Action Elements of the three plans and associated with the “Financially Unconstrained” alternative or the “Financially Constrained – No New Revenues” alternative would mitigate these transportation system problems to some extent. Under the “No Build” alternative, no new pedestrian-oriented projects would be completed, transit services would not receive the funding necessary to expand, and there would be no new rail services within the region. The three plans would provide these projects and programs, and with an increased number of transportation system improvement projects completed within the region, the “Financially Unconstrained” alternative would be expected to provide improved regional transportation and access relative to the implementation of the financially constrained Action Elements of the three plans. However, the roadway improvement projects associated with the three plans and the “Financially Unconstrained” alternative or the “Financially Constrained – No New Revenues” alternative could be expected to result in increased deteriorations in traffic operations along other roadways in the vicinity of some of these projects (which could ultimately prove **significant and unavoidable** for some projects), design features which could result in a substantial increase in hazards, temporary interruptions of traffic which could impede emergency access, and some projects might not provide sufficient parking capacity to meet anticipated demand. Implementation of the three plans and the “Financially Unconstrained” alternative or the “Financially Constrained – No New Revenues” alternative would generally be consistent with (and not in conflict with) the adopted policies, plans or programs of jurisdictions within Monterey, San Benito and Santa Cruz counties which support alternative transportation

modes, while the “No Build” alternative would not provide a similar level of support for transportation alternatives to the single-occupant vehicle.

### Utilities and Service Systems

The implementation of either the three plans, the “No Build” alternative, the “Financially Unconstrained” alternative or the “Financially Constrained – No New Revenues” alternative would not be expected to result in any direct increase in the regional demand placed on the existing wastewater treatment capacity or solid waste disposal facilities. Some projects associated with the financially constrained Action Elements of the three plans, and with the “Financially Unconstrained” alternative or the “Financially Constrained – No New Revenues” alternative could be expected to require project-related irrigation or storm drainage improvements which could entail significant environmental impacts. Construction activity associated with some of the projects identified in the three plans, and associated with the “Financially Unconstrained” alternative or the “Financially Constrained – No New Revenues” alternative could be expected to result in temporary disruptions in utility service, although these impacts could be reduced to a level of less than significant with implementation of the identified mitigation measures.

### Summary of Evaluation of Alternatives

The term “environmentally superior” is not defined within CEQA Guidelines, and as a result, may be subject to different interpretations. In evaluating alternatives, different people may assign different values, or weights, to the relative importance of specific environmental impacts. For example, some might “give more weight” to potential land use plan consistency impacts in the alternatives analysis than to traffic-related impacts, while others may feel that traffic-related impacts should “carry more weight” in the analysis than air quality or noise impacts.

For the purposes of environmental analysis, the “No Build” alternative would be regarded as the “environmentally superior” alternative. Since it would require no new construction, this alternative would not entail any of the potentially significant construction-related impacts which might be associated with some of the projects identified in the financially constrained Action Elements of the three plans, or associated with the “Financially Unconstrained” alternative or the “Financially Constrained – No New Revenues” alternative (e.g., conversion of land in agricultural use, noise, dust, alteration in visual characteristics, disturbance of cultural resources, changes in drainage patterns, etc.). **However, the “No Build” alternative would not pursue the goals and strategies of the three plans, and would provide the least efficient and most congested transportation system of all alternatives examined (including the three plans).**

Under CEQA, when the “No Project” alternative has been identified as the “environmentally superior” alternative, it is necessary to identify another alternative which would represent the “environmentally superior” alternative in the absence of the “No Project” alternative. Since the “No Build” alternative represents the “No Project” alternative in this evaluation, another alternative must be identified as the “environmentally superior” alternative in the absence of the “No Build”

alternative. The three plans (with implementation of all transportation system improvement programs and projects identified in the financially constrained Action Element only), the “Financially Unconstrained” alternative and the “Financially Constrained – No New Revenues” alternative would all entail the same types of potential environmental impacts. However, the potential environmental impacts which may be associated with these alternatives are not identical.

The “Financially Unconstrained” alternative, with its expanded list of transportation system improvement projects, could be expected to entail more potentially significant construction-related impacts in a greater number of locations than the implementation of the projects identified in the financially constrained Action Elements of the three plans, although the basic character of these impacts (when viewed in terms of each individual project) would be expected to remain about the same. Since all of the projects identified in the financially constrained Action Elements of the three plans are included within the “Financially Unconstrained” alternative, and because the additional projects listed in the “Financially Unconstrained” alternative (see **Appendix C**) could be expected to entail similar types of impacts, but at an increased number of project sites, this would not be regarded as the “environmentally superior” alternative.

The “Financially Constrained – No New Revenues” alternative would result in the implementation of all of the transportation system improvement projects identified in the financially constrained Action Elements of the three plans, but due to reduced availability of funding, it would be expected to take longer to complete these projects than currently anticipated. Although the type and magnitude of impacts associated with this alternative would be identical to those associated with the Project, delays in Action Element implementation might be expected to result in some reduction in the potential cumulative environmental impacts associated with project-specific construction activity when listed projects would otherwise be expected to be completed simultaneously within the same general areas (e.g., construction-related water quality impacts, construction-related air quality impacts, construction-related noise impacts, etc.). However, the delay in project completion resulting from funding constraints in the absence of new revenues could also be expected to result in some delays in obtaining the anticipated traffic congestion relief and related air quality benefits that may be associated with such projects. For this reason, the “Financially Constrained – No New Revenues” alternative would not be regarded as being “environmentally superior” to the full implementation of the financially constrained Action Element programs and projects identified in the three plans.

In the absence of the “No Build” alternative, the implementation of the three plans, including all projects identified in the financially constrained Action Element lists in these transportation plans, would be considered the “environmentally superior” alternative.

If the environmental impacts which may be associated with the implementation of the transportation system improvement programs and projects identified in the financially constrained Action Elements of the three plans are determined to outweigh the improvements in the regional transportation system which are anticipated, then the “No Build” alternative must be considered as the “environmentally superior” alternative. However, in balancing the environmental “costs” and transportation system improvement “benefits”, in the absence of the programs and projects

identified in the financially constrained Action Elements of the three plans, traffic conditions would be expected to remain unacceptable and deficient along some local roadways. The environmental “costs” associated with the “No Build” alternative are the lowest of all the alternatives examined, but the “No Build” alternative also provides the lowest level of transportation system “benefits” of all the alternatives examined, and would still be associated with potentially significant adverse environmental impacts (most notably, a deterioration in air quality linked to increased traffic congestion).