

5.0 GROWTH INDUCING IMPACTS

Section 15126(g) of the *State CEQA Guidelines* requires a discussion of a project's potential to foster economic or population growth, including ways in which a project could remove an obstacle to growth. Based on the CEQA Guidelines, growth inducement is any growth that exceeds planned growth of an area and results in new development that would not have taken place without implementation of the project. The project's potential to induce growth is discussed in this section.

Growth does not necessarily create significant physical changes to the environment. However, depending upon the type, magnitude, and location of growth, it can result in significant adverse environmental effects. The project's growth inducing potential is therefore considered significant if it could result in unavoidable significant effects in one or more environmental issue areas.

5.1 ECONOMIC GROWTH

Implementation of the RTP would create short-term economic growth in the county as a result of construction-related job opportunities. RTP implementation would also generate additional employment opportunities for roadway, vehicle, and landscape maintenance, and transportation facility clean-up. The potential employment increase may subsequently increase the demand for support services and utilities, which could generate secondary employment opportunities. This additional economic growth would likely raise the existing revenue base for the County of Santa Cruz. Although such growth may incrementally increase economic activity in the county, significant physical effects are not expected to result from economic growth generated by the project.

5.2 POPULATION GROWTH

Between 1990 and 2000 the population of the County of Santa Cruz increased 11 percent, from 229,700 to 255,600 (2000 Census). Population in the SCCRTC region is expected to increase regardless of the 2001 RTP. According to AMBAG, the region's population will grow to approximately 304,000 by 2020 if local general plans are built out. The 2001 RTP will not directly generate population, since the Project does not involve the construction of residential units, however it does have the potential to facilitate growth.

The 2001 RTP implements some aspects of the circulation elements of the general plans of local jurisdictions in the region. Many of these projects could serve as traffic mitigation measures for anticipated growth under these local plans. Implementation of the RTP would not entail a substantial change in land use anywhere in the county. Rather, the plan responds to existing and projected transportation needs. The RTP does propose several new approaches to transportation planning, including the use of various intelligent transportation system, transit oriented development, and alternative fuel technologies (see Tables 2-1 and 2-2 in Section 2.0, Project Description). These new approaches may set new precedent for transportation



planning in the county; however, such approaches would not be expected to result in significant adverse environmental impacts.

5.3 REMOVAL OF OBSTACLES TO GROWTH

As discussed in Section 4.2, *Land Use*, implementation of the RTP may remove impediments to growth in some limited fashion. While the transportation system improvements included in the RTP are expected to respond to growth anticipated in adopted local general plans, they may indirectly increase growth pressure by increasing transportation system capacity. In addition, the road extension projects planned in the less developed areas, may remove obstacles to growth by improving vehicular access. Development induced as a result of removal of obstacles to growth could result in additional environmental impacts (e.g., additional noise and traffic), and may increase the use of slowly renewable and nonrenewable resources and energy to serve new development. For example, induced development projects could affect regional groundwater supplies. However, the nature and magnitude of such impacts are speculative, and would be largely a function of local agency control, prevailing community attitudes, and future market conditions. The environmental impacts of any additional growth would depend upon the type, location, and magnitude of new development.

Policy Evaluation to Assess the RTP's Growth-Inducement Potential. The potential for a long-term plan (such as an RTP) to be growth-inducing is a function of three factors: 1) the type of growth the plan envisions; 2) policy direction that regulates the rate at which this growth could occur; and 3) funding availability. The RTP provides a mechanism to implement the circulation projects described in local general plans and capital improvement programs. In that sense, an RTP is not growth-inducing. However, an RTP may contain policy direction that could influence the timing of these projects, generally through establishing funding priorities. If, for example, priority is given to projects that would increase roadway capacities or extend the existing roadway network, these improved roads (generally major arterials or freeways) would allow land development envisioned under the local general plans to occur at a faster rate. This could be considered growth-inducing.

The following discussion evaluates RTP policies to assess the plan's potential to be growth-inducing.

In general, the goals and policies of the 2001 RTP support a multi-modal transportation concept, emphasizing the importance of alternative forms of transportation, including bicycles, transit, and pedestrian activity. Most crucially, the RTP contains the following policies that link transportation planning and regional land use patterns.

Goal 2: *Increase mobility by providing an improved and integrated multi-modal transportation system.*



2.4.5 *Allow construction of new arterial/collector roads only when transit and/or existing facilities cannot accommodate demand and negative environmental impacts can be avoided, minimized or mitigated.*

Goal 3: *Coordinate land use and transportation decisions to ensure that the region's social, cultural, and economic vitality is sustained for current and future generations.*

3.2 *Reduce auto-dependent development by emphasizing opportunities to reuse underutilized urban land for housing and compact, mixed-use developments.*

3.2.1 *Encourage land-use policies which locate child care facilities at or near residential areas and around transit centers.*

3.2.2 *Support higher density and affordable housing opportunities in urban areas served by transit for families and individuals who prefer compact urban living due to their age, student status, family and marital situation, cultural amenities, transit preference or dependency, and/or desire for increased sense of community.*

3.2.3 *Support land-use patterns which discourage urban sprawl.*

3.2.4 *Encourage infill projects in urban areas along existing major transportation routes.*

3.3 *Support established urban communities, residential neighborhoods, major activity and recreation centers, and commercial districts with a broad range of transportation options.*

3.3.4 *Limit development unless transportation impacts can be mitigated or improvements funded by the project.*

3.4 *Encourage transit-oriented development and provide alternatives to automobile commutes by linking land-use decisions with transit, bikeway, pedestrian and park-and-ride investments.*



3.4.7 *Work with local jurisdictions to implement land-use policies that promote jobs/housing balance along existing and future transit routes.*

Goal 4: *Ensure that the transportation system complements and enhances the natural environment of the Monterey Bay region.*

4.1 *Emphasize sustainable transportation modes consistent with regional environmental policies.*

4.2 *Ensure that transportation projects contribute to improved regional air quality and reduced energy consumption.*

These policies tend to encourage land use patterns that promote a balance of transportation modes, for the long-term purpose of maintaining a sustainable development pattern. Nevertheless, the following policies recognize the primacy of the automobile in the county's transportation modal mixture:

Goal 1: *Preserve and maintain the existing transportation system, emphasizing safety and efficiency.*

1.2 *Continue to provide facilities to accommodate automobile use in recognition that it is the current transportation mode of choice for the majority of people in the county.*

1.4 *Minimize vehicular delay and transit travel times through low cost/high benefit operational improvements, with highest priority given to improving transit travel times.*

1.4.1 *Encourage signal standardization and signal timing improvements, with respect for pedestrian mobility and bicycle access, and discourage unwarranted stops on arterial streets.*

1.4.2 *Improve freeway traffic flow through consideration of ramp metering on Highway 1 between Highway 17 and Freedom Boulevard.*

These policies suggest that the RTP prioritizes transportation improvements related to the automobile, particularly with regard to maximizing traffic flows on major arterials and freeways.



Because they are priorities, it is likely that such projects, when implemented, would allow for a more rapid rate of growth in the communities along the major corridors, in accordance with the local general plans. In this sense, these RTP policies may be considered growth inducing. In addition, Goal 5 and its attendant policies appear to send potentially conflicting direction with respect to the RTP's philosophical emphasis regarding transportation priorities:

Goal 5: *Make the most efficient use of limited transportation financial resources.*

5.4 Set funding priorities in the following way (not in priority order):

5.4.1 High priority shall be given to transportation improvements within the county which reduce weekday peak-hour congestion and/or improve safety.

5.4.2 Give high funding priority to pedestrian, bicycle and other alternative transportation mode improvements that serve students.

5.4.11 Support transportation investments that encourage sustainable land-use practices.

5.4.12 Give priority to any long-term measures which reduce dependence on single-occupant vehicles.

These policies suggest that all transportation projects have high priority. Policies 5.4.1 and 5.4.2 seems to place equally high priority on automobile and alternative transportation modes. While this is consistent with the overall goal of providing multi-modal transportation opportunities in the county, it suggests that by placing a high priority on all projects, none are actually prioritized. Such a goal should be modified to reflect the policy direction found elsewhere in the RTP, particularly with regard to improving air quality, jobs/housing balance, sustainable growth, and environmental protection. To minimize possible growth inducement, it is suggested that roadway projects, if given priority, should be prioritized on the basis of 1) improving safety; 2) addressing existing capacity deficiencies; or 3) addressing potential impacts of planned land development that is the subject of an active development application. Priority should not be given to roadway projects that would allow land development that has not yet been planned for, or is not anticipated to occur in the near future. In this way, the growth-inducing potential of the RTP would be minimized.

