



CITY COUNCIL AGENDA STATEMENT



June 9, 2020

File ID: 20-0178

TITLE

RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF CHULA VISTA ADOPTING THE CHULA VISTA TRANSPORTATION STUDY GUIDELINES IMPLEMENTING SENATE BILL 743

RECOMMENDED ACTION

Council adopt the resolution.

SUMMARY

On September 27, 2013, Governor Jerry Brown signed Senate Bill (SB) 743 into law, changing how transportation impacts are analyzed pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). The primary change eliminates the Level of Service (LOS) methodology for determining significant impacts and replaces it with an analysis of Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT). The City is required to implement the new transportation impact analysis procedures by July 1, 2020. The Office of Planning and Research (OPR) issued a set of guidelines in December 2018 to implement SB 743 and give municipalities guidance on preparing the document. Staff has worked with a consultant team led by Fehr & Peers, a transportation engineering firm with extensive experience supporting agency adoption of SB 743 requirements, to develop the draft Transportation Study Guidelines (TSG). Key elements of the TSG were presented to Building Industry Association representatives on April 15, 2020, and staff requested that the Planning Commission refer the document to the City Council for adoption on May 27, 2020. (Scheduled presentations to the Growth Management Oversight Commission (April 16, 2020) and the Safety Commission (May 6, 2020) were cancelled in response to social distancing protocols arising from the COVID-19 pandemic.)

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

The Director of Development Services has reviewed the proposed activity for compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and has determined that the activity is not a "Project" as defined under Section 15378 of the State CEQA Guidelines because it will not result in a physical change to the environment; therefore, pursuant to Section 15060(c)(3) of the State CEQA Guidelines, the activity is not subject to CEQA. Thus, no environmental review is required.

BOARD/COMMISSION/COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION

The Planning Commission met on May 27, 2020 and voted 7-0-0 to recommend that Council consider and approve the resolution.

DISCUSSION

Background on VMT

VMT accounts for the number of vehicle trips generated plus the length or distance of those trips. By way of example, one vehicle driving 100 miles would result in 100 VMT, which is the same as 10 vehicles going 10 miles.

In contrast, LOS is a measure of traffic congestion, and the main inputs are traffic volumes and capacity (i.e., number of vehicles and number of lanes). There are generally lower volumes and more unused capacity in outlying or greenfield areas than in built up areas where infill development could occur. As a result, traffic generated by greenfield development would be more likely to exhibit good LOS, while the opposite would be true for infill development. As a result, OPR concluded that LOS-based CEQA review is more likely to result in significant impacts for infill development than greenfield development, thus discouraging infill development. OPR asserts that the LOS methodology has contributed toward urban sprawl and increased greenhouse gas emissions from traffic.

Mitigation for LOS-based impacts typically involves adding through and/or turning lanes at intersections to increase vehicular capacity. These improvements make roadways less hospitable to pedestrians and bicyclists, and LOS analysis generally considers pedestrians and bicyclists as having a negative effect on LOS. The resulting roadway network often includes wide, high-speed arterial roadways that primarily serve motor vehicles. Unlike LOS, VMT data cannot be observed in the field by measuring traffic volumes or intersection delay. Typical mitigation for significant LOS impacts requires expanding the road network's capacity. In contrast, mitigation for significant VMT impacts is not as obvious. Rather than performing data collection, practitioners use travel forecast models (such as the San Diego Association of Governments' Activity Based Models) and various spreadsheet tools to calculate VMT. Mitigation is aimed at reducing the number of trips and/or the distance of trips and may include measures such as Transportation Demand Management (TDM), improved access to transit, and improved active transportation modes.

TSG Development

Following consultant selection and contract award in December 2019, a City team consisting of Development Services and Engineering & Capital Projects personnel worked closely with the consultants toward the objective of bringing the TSG before the City Council for adoption on or before July 1, 2020. The first task of the work program included a review of relevant City plans, regulations, and other documents (i.e., the General Plan Land Use and Mobility Element, the Growth Management Ordinance, Transportation Development Impact Fee nexus studies, the Active Transportation Plan, and a preliminary draft TDM program) to identify goals, policies, objectives, and/or regulations that are supportive of, or in conflict with, SB 743 implementation. The consultant also presented key elements of the ongoing implementation efforts of other agencies, including the City of San Diego, the County of San Diego, the City of Riverside, and the North Orange County collaborative group, consisting of seven cities working together on SB 743 implementation. .

The team convened meetings with the City Manager and senior staff from Development Services and Engineering & Capital Projects to outline the upcoming work program and schedule; to get management perspectives on key elements of the TSG; and to get direction on interim SB 743 implementation. Following

the internal context meetings, the team presented a report to the City Council on March 10, 2020 which provided an overview of SB 743 and VMT and described scheduled outreach activities and the proposed implementation schedule.

Following the City Council meeting, the team began drafting the TSG. Staff and the consultant team compiled recommendations on key elements of the document, including modeling methods; the basis of comparison for determining impact significance (i.e., the Citywide or regional average); the geographic unit used to present baseline VMT (i.e., Traffic Analysis Zone or census tract); screening criteria for various project types and locations significance thresholds; project-level mitigation procedures; the use of LOS for operational considerations, multi-modal analysis; and other considerations. These recommendations, together with the pro's and con's of alternative courses of action, were presented to management on April 8, 2020 and consensus was developed on how the City would proceed. Following this meeting, staff presented the key elements of the TSG to representatives of the Building Industry Association on April 15, 2020. As discussed above, scheduled meetings to present the TSG to the Safety Commission and the Growth Management Oversight Committee were cancelled in response to social distancing protocols resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Overview of the TSG

As stated in the TSG, the objectives of the document are as follows:

- Provide clear direction to applicants and consultants to better meet expectations, increase the efficiency of the review process, and minimize delays.
- Provide scoping procedures and recommendations for early coordination during the planning/discretionary phases of a land development project.
- Provide guidance for determining when, what type, and how to prepare a Transportation Study.
- Enhance consistency, uniformity, and accuracy in the preparation of a Transportation Study.
- Promote quality assurance in transportation studies by having applicants agree upfront to the assumptions, data requirements, study scenarios, and analysis methodologies.
- Provide consistency and equity in the identification of measures to mitigate the transportation impacts generated by land development.
- Assist City staff in developing objective recommendations and project conditions of approval as part of the land development discretionary review process.
- Ensure that Chula Vista transportation studies are in conformance with all applicable City, regional, and state regulations, including legislative requirements as part of CEQA.

Transportation Study Preparation

The first step in preparing a Transportation Study is to complete a Project Information Form (PIF), which is completed by the Transportation Study preparer and submitted to the City for review and comment. In this document, the preparer provides detailed information about the nature of the proposal (e.g., land use type, intensity, General Plan and zoning consistency, etc.) an assessment on whether or not the project meets one or more screening criteria, and determination of whether or not the project must analyze its effects on LOS and local transit, pedestrian, and bicycle facilities in a Local Mobility Analysis (LMA). Depending on the results of the City's review of the information provided in the PIF, the requirement for (and the scope of) the

VMT analysis and the LMA are determined. The Transportation Study is then prepared in accordance with the procedures specified in the TSG, including the main body of the document and its appendices. The TSG provides direction (and best practices) on eligible project-specific measures to mitigate CEQA impacts, as well as operational improvements to alleviate effects on LOS and other travel modes. The CEQA-required VMT analysis is documented in Volume 1 of the Transportation Study, while Volume 2 contains the LMA.

In order to minimize the time and expense required to prepare a Transportation Study, the maximum extent of the LMA study area (i.e., the intersections to be analyzed) has been limited based on traffic generation, traffic assignment, and distance between the project site to the intersection being analyzed. The LMA also reduces the number of future year traffic scenarios to be analyzed, as compared to typical, pre-SB 743 traffic studies. As discussed above, the TSG may be updated in the future, subject to the approval of the City Manager or designee.

Next Steps

Following the adoption of the TSG, staff intends to move forward on the following VMT-related actions:

1. Develop guidance to Transportation Study preparers on the application of project-specific mitigation measures.
2. Develop larger-scale programmatic mitigation measures for VMT impacts. Options include developing a new mobility fee or implementing an in-lieu fee in which a project reduces its VMT impacts through the payment of a fee. The consulting team is under contract to support this effort and initial meetings will commence shortly after TSG adoption.

DECISION-MAKER CONFLICT

Staff has reviewed the decision contemplated by this action and has determined that it is not site-specific and consequently, the real property holdings of the City Council members do not create a disqualifying real property-related financial conflict of interest under the Political Reform Act (Cal. Gov't Code § 87100, et seq.).

Staff is not independently aware and has not been informed by any City Council member, of any other fact that may constitute a basis for a decision-maker conflict of interest in this matter.

CURRENT-YEAR FISCAL IMPACT

Staff and consultant effort and expenses for development and implementation of the TSG are paid for by the Development Service Fund, the Eastern Transportation Development Impact Fee, and the Western Transportation Development Impact Fee. Staff effort for reviewing Transportation Studies will continue to be funded through Developer Deposit Accounts established to cover staff review time.

ONGOING FISCAL IMPACT

With the inclusion of the ongoing tasks related to mitigation, the contract is likely to extend into subsequent fiscal years; however, the appropriations authorized by the City Council under Resolution 2019-236 are sufficient to complete the full scope of work. Therefore, no ongoing fiscal impact is anticipated. However, should an unanticipated fiscal impact arise from the implementation of SB 743, it will be fully disclosed to the City Council in conjunction with future implementing actions.

ATTACHMENTS

1. Draft Transportation Study Guidelines

Staff Contact: Scott Barker, Transportation Engineer