
7.0 LONG-TERM IMPLICATIONS OF THE PROJECT

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This section discusses the additional topics statutorily required by CEQA. The topics discussed include significant and unavoidable environmental impacts, growth-inducing impacts, and significant irreversible environmental changes/irretrievable commitment of resources.

7.1 SIGNIFICANT AND UNAVOIDABLE ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS

CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.2(b) requires an EIR to discuss unavoidable significant environmental effects, including those that can be mitigated but not reduced to a level of insignificance. In addition, Section 15093(a) of the CEQA Guidelines allows the decision-making agency to determine if the benefits of a proposed project outweigh the unavoidable adverse environmental impacts of implementing the project. The City can approve a project with unavoidable adverse impacts if it prepares a "Statement of Overriding Considerations" setting forth the specific reasons for making such a judgment. A list of unavoidable adverse impacts identified in this Draft EIR is provided below.

LAND USE

Impact 5.1.1 Consistency with General Plan and other Land Use Plans

AA Under the No Project alternative, Franklin Boulevard and Elk Grove Boulevard would not be widened or improved and would maintain their existing conditions. The No Project alternative would be inconsistent with the City General Plan that shows Franklin Boulevard is to be improved to a six lane arterial in Figure CI-2, Master Plan of Roadways. This would be a **significant impact**.

No mitigation measures are available other than the project to mitigate for this impact. Implementing AA would result in a **significant and unavoidable** impact regarding consistency with the roadway improvements required in the City of Elk Grove General Plan.

TRANSPORTATION AND CIRCULATION

Impact 5.4.3 Future Year 2025 Plus Project: Intersection Operations

AA Under the No Project Alternative, no roadway or intersection improvements would be made to accommodate the Year 2025 predicted increases in traffic volumes and vehicle trips due to planned residential and commercial growth outlined in the City of Elk Grove General Plan and East Franklin Specific Plan. This alternative would result in a **significant impact** to most intersection and roadway segments in the project area, as they would operate at unacceptable levels of service.

The future year 2025 no project conditions would result in practically all study intersections and roadway segments projected to operate at LOS "F" conditions under Year 2025 AM and PM peak hour periods with the existing intersection lane geometrics and control. As shown in Tables 5.4-7 and 5.4-8, four of the five intersections would operate at LOS "E" or LOS "F" in one or both of the AM/PM peak hour, and three of the six roadway segments would operate at LOS "F" under future 2025 conditions without the project. No mitigation measures are available other than the project to mitigate for this impact. Implementing AA would result in a **significant and unavoidable impact** to LOS traffic conditions.

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Impact 5.4.4 Cumulative Traffic Impacts on Local Roadways

AA Under the No Project alternative, increases in traffic volumes and congestion are predicted for most intersection and roadway segments within the project area by Year 2025 due to cumulative growth. Existing lane geometrics and controls with no improvements would cause a **cumulatively significant impact** to traffic operations, level of service, and safety.

No mitigation measures are available other than the project to mitigate for this impact.

PUBLIC SERVICES AND UTILITIES

Impact 5.12.2 Impacts to Utilities

AB, AC Project construction would require encroachment into an existing SRCSD easement that could significantly impact construction and maintenance of a future sewer interceptor within this easement. This is considered a **significant impact**.

No mitigation measures are feasible for the impact AB and AC would have on the installation of the SRCSD/CSD-1 future sewer interceptor on the east side of Franklin Boulevard. The sewer interceptor cannot be moved to the west side of Franklin Boulevard due to the SNLWR. This would be considered a **significant and unavoidable** impact.

7.2 GROWTH-INDUCING IMPACTS

INTRODUCTION

CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.2(d) requires that an EIR evaluate the growth-inducing impacts of a proposed action. A "growth-inducing impact" is defined by the CEQA Guidelines as follows:

...the way in which a proposed project could foster economic or population growth, or the construction of additional housing, either directly or indirectly, in the surrounding environment. Included in this are projects which would remove obstacles to population growth...Increases in the population may tax existing community service facilities, requiring construction of new facilities that could cause significant environmental effects. Also...the characteristic of some projects which may encourage and facilitate other activities that could significantly affect the environment, either individually or cumulatively (CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.2[d]).

A project can have direct and/or indirect growth inducement potential. Direct growth inducement would result if a project, for example, involved construction of new housing. A project would have indirect growth inducement potential if it established substantial new permanent employment opportunities (e.g., commercial, industrial or governmental enterprises) or if it would involve a construction effort with substantial short-term employment opportunities that would indirectly stimulate the need for additional housing and services to support the new employment demand. Similarly, a project would indirectly induce growth if it would remove an obstacle to additional growth and development such as removing a constraint on a required public service. For example, project providing an increased water supply in an area where water service historically limited growth could be considered growth-inducing.

The CEQA Guidelines further explain that the environmental effects of induced growth are considered indirect impacts of the proposed action. These indirect impacts or secondary effects of growth may result in significant, adverse environmental impacts. Potential secondary effects of growth include increased demand on other community and public services and infrastructure, increased traffic and noise, and adverse environmental impacts such as degradation of air and water quality, degradation or loss of plant and animal habitat, and conversion of agricultural and open space land to developed uses.

The CEQA Guidelines state that it is not assumed that growth in an area is necessarily beneficial, detrimental, or of little significance to the environment (CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.2[d]). However, growth inducement may constitute an adverse impact if the growth is not consistent with or accommodated by the land use plans and growth management plans and policies for the area affected. Local land use plans provide for land use development patterns and growth policies that allow for the orderly expansion of urban development supported by adequate urban public services, such as water supply, roadway infrastructure, sewer service, and solid waste service. A project that would induce "disorderly" growth (growth that conflicts with local land use plans) could indirectly cause additional adverse environmental impacts and other public services impacts. Thus, to assess whether a growth-inducing project would result in adverse secondary effects, it is important to assess the degree to which the growth accommodated by a project would or would not be consistent with applicable land use plans.

COMPONENTS OF GROWTH

The timing, magnitude, and location of land development and population growth in a community or region are based upon various interrelated land use and economic variables. Key variables include regional economic trends, market demand for residential and non-residential uses, land availability and cost, the availability and quality of transportation facilities and public services, proximity to employment centers, the supply and cost of housing, and regulatory policies or conditions. Since the general plan of a community defines the location, type and intensity of growth, it is the primary means of regulating development and growth in California.

Capacity and Growth

Growth accommodating and growth constraining are two terms that are used to describe growth. Growth accommodating is designing a system to best handle upcoming growth trends. The City of Elk Grove has rapidly been increasing in population both before and after its incorporation in July of 2000. Growth constraining effects occur when necessary roadway improvements are not made.

GROWTH EFFECTS

Development under the City of Elk Grove General Plan and regional growth expected by the year 2025 is expected to result in significant roadway impacts. The City of Elk Grove needs to improve its transportation infrastructure to prevent growth constraining effects. It is assumed that growth will continue to occur within the City of Elk Grove regardless of the roadway system. More desirable land, housing, jobs, schools, or other factors will bring new residents to the area even if there is considerable congestion on the roadways. If the roadway system does not expand with the increase of new residents and businesses, the level of service on the roadways will continue to deteriorate. The proposed project would accommodate the planned growth in the City of Elk Grove.

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The future year 2025 no project conditions would result in practically all study intersections and roadway segments projected to operate at LOS "F" conditions under Year 2025 AM and PM peak hour periods with the existing intersection lane geometrics and control. The Franklin Boulevard/Poppy Ridge Drive intersection is projected to operate at Year 2025 peak hour LOS "D" conditions. The proposed project would improve LOS conditions at all intersections and roadway segments within the study segment. The Elk Grove Boulevard/Franklin Boulevard intersection is projected to operate at Year 2025 AM peak hour LOS "E" conditions with the proposed widening project. This represents operations below the City target of LOS "D" or better conditions for this intersection. Projected Year 2025 operations for this intersection is consistent with the cumulative operations indicated in the Transportation Analysis for the East Franklin Specific Plan. In addition, Policy CI-14 of the Elk Grove General Plan Circulation Element recognizes that acceptable LOS may not be achievable in some roadway segments or intersections. The proposed project would improve LOS conditions at this intersection in Year 2025 AM peak hour from LOS "F" to LOS "E" conditions, and reduce delays by more than one half. This would be an improvement over the future year 2025 operations at this intersection without the project.

The PP, AB, AC and AD would serve to improve LOS conditions and relieve congestion and improve flow of traffic at intersections and along the project road segments of Franklin Boulevard and Elk Grove Boulevard in the future.

The AA would result in unacceptable LOS conditions at intersections and future traffic flows along Franklin Boulevard and Elk Grove Boulevard would experience increasing delays.

SECONDARY EFFECTS OF GROWTH

Because the proposed project would support planned urban development as allowed for under the City's General Plan, it could indirectly result in some secondary environmental effects of growth that are associated with the adopted General Plan. The City General Plan EIR identifies significant and unavoidable impacts associated with the General Plan adoption for areas such as cumulative traffic congestion and noise, increased emissions from mobile sources, loss of productive farmland and open space resources, alteration of scenic resources and rural landscapes, and impacts to biological resources. The Findings of Fact and Statement of Overriding Considerations accompanying the adoption of the General Plan EIR found that the effects are necessary and unavoidable because "the project would allow the City to make appropriate land use decisions."

The PP, AB, AC and AD would be necessary to accommodate growth consistent with planned growth in the City of Elk Grove, and would help to relieve cumulative traffic congestion.

The AA would not support growth and would result in increased secondary growth effects relative to traffic congestion.

7.3 SIGNIFICANT IRREVERSIBLE ENVIRONMENTAL CHANGES

Public Resources Code Section 21100(b)(2), a part of CEQA, requires that certain EIRs must include a discussion of significant irreversible environmental changes of project implementation. CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.2(c) describes irreversible environmental changes as follows:

Uses of nonrenewable resources during the initial and continued phases of the project may be irreversible since a large commitment of such resources makes removal or nonuse thereafter unlikely. Primary impacts and, particularly,

secondary impacts (such as highway improvement which provides access to a previously inaccessible area) generally commit future generations to similar uses. Also irreversible damage can result from environmental accidents associated with the project. Irretrievable commitments of resources should be evaluated to assure that such current consumption is justified.

Long-term irreversible environmental changes would include the permanent loss of Prime Farmland and Farmland of Statewide Importance; a change in the visual character of the site; an increase in local and regional traffic and associated air pollutant emissions and noise level increases; and an increase in water consumption.

Although the PP, AB, AC and AD would use minor amounts of both renewable and nonrenewable natural resources for project construction, the widening of an existing roadway would not significantly increase the overall rate of use of any natural resource, or result in the substantial depletion of any nonrenewable natural resources.

The PP, AB, AC, and AD involves the widening of existing segments of Franklin Boulevard and Elk Grove Boulevard rather than the construction of new roadways; therefore, the area is already accessible to the public. The roadway segments would be widened to accommodate existing and planned growth in the area. The City of Elk Grove General Plan analyzed impacts of conversion of farmland, including conversions for transportation improvements. Elk Grove General Plan Policy CAQ-2 acknowledges the loss of agricultural productivity as a consequence of development within Elk Grove. The project would not result in any new impacts to farmland within the city limits that were not previously disclosed in the Elk Grove General Plan EIR. The acquisition of right-of-way from lands designated for important farmlands for the purposes of widening an existing roadway would not remove the potential for agricultural uses on the remainder of those lands, and would not negate the rights of owners/farmers on adjoining and nearby parcels to continue farming, if they so desire. In addition, project design would ensure that access to SLNWR for livestock grazing would be maintained so that existing uses could continue. The project design would also ensure that new fences are erected parallel to the widened roadways to prevent public access to the SLNWR, and thus serve the same purpose as existing fences pursuant to USFWS land use policies associated with the conservation easement pertaining to this parcel. The proposed project itself would not commit future generations to the significant irreversible change of modifying a portion of the project site from agricultural land uses to urban uses.

The PP, AB, AC and AD are not anticipated to result in irreversible damage from environmental accidents, such as an accidental spill or explosion of a hazardous material. During construction, various hazardous materials would be stored and used at the site. Mitigation Measures 5.3.1 and 5.3.2 would reduce any impacts to less than significant.

7.4 MANDATORY FINDINGS OF SIGNIFICANCE

State CEQA Guidelines Section 15065 identifies four mandatory findings of significance that must be considered as part of the environmental review process of a project. These findings are identified below with an analysis of the project's relationship to these findings.

The project has the potential to substantially degrade the quality of the environment; substantially reduce the habitat of a fish or wildlife species; cause a fish or wildlife population to drop below self-sustaining levels; threaten to eliminate a plant or animal community; substantially reduce the number or restrict the range of an endangered, rare or threatened

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species; or eliminate important examples of the major periods of California history or prehistory.

Sections 5.1 through 5.12 of the Draft EIR address environmental impacts that are anticipated to occur with implementation of the project and alternatives. Section 5.9 (Biological and Natural Resources) evaluates in detail the project's impact on biological resources, including the potential of the project to reduce the habitat of a fish or wildlife species, cause a fish or wildlife population to drop below self-sustaining levels, threaten to eliminate a plant or animal community, or substantially reduce the number or restrict the range of an endangered, rare or threatened species. As discussed in Section 5.9, the project would have a less than significant impact on loss of common habitat, loss of habitat for special-status species, loss of protected wetlands, and cumulative biological impacts with the implementation of mitigation measures identified in Section 5.9 and mitigation measure 5.1.1 in the land Use section of this EIR regarding land transfer that would incorporate mitigation and compensation equal to the biological value of the SLNWR land the City would acquire for the project

Section 5.10 (Cultural Resources) evaluates in detail the project's potential impacts on cultural resources. Archaeological and historical investigations for the project area (which includes the area in which the PP, AB, AC and AD would be located) did not identify any historic properties, historical resources, or significant archaeological resources. No cultural resources were identified in the project area, and it is previously disturbed by a variety of ground disturbing activities (e.g., construction of roads, installation of infrastructure, and residential construction). The UPRR Overhead Bridge is less than 45 years old and will not be affected by any project related activity.

The project has the potential to achieve short-term environmental goals to the disadvantage of long-term environmental goals.

As noted in Sections 5.4 and 5.12 of the Draft EIR, the AA, AB, and AC would result in significant and unavoidable impacts, which would have long-term environmental effects. AA would result in a significant and unavoidable impact to most intersections and roadway segments in the project area, as they would operate at unacceptable levels of service and not be consistent with the City of Elk Grove traffic operations standards. AB and AC would result in encroachment into an existing SRCSD easement that could significantly impact construction and maintenance of a future sewer interceptor within this easement. This would impact the installation of the SRCSD/CSD-1 future sewer interceptor on the east side of Franklin Boulevard, and the sewer interceptor cannot be moved to the west side of Franklin Boulevard due to the SNLWR. When feasible, mitigation measures would be required to reduce impacts to less than significant levels. None of the mitigation measures are anticipated to achieve short-term environmental goals, but have negative long-term environmental effects.

In the case of biological resources, project-level impacts can be mitigated to less than significant levels as discussed in Section 5.9 (Biological and Natural Resources).

The project has possible environmental effects that are individually limited but cumulatively considerable. "Cumulatively considerable" means that the incremental effects of an individual project are significant when viewed in connection with the effects of past projects, the effects of other current projects, and the effects of probable future projects.

The cumulative effect of developing the project site along with other development anticipated to occur in the area is addressed in Section 5.0 (Cumulative Impacts Summary) and discussed in detail in Sections 5.1 through 5.12. This Draft EIR evaluates cumulative environmental impacts

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associated with the project and determines whether the project's contribution is cumulatively considerable.

This draft EIR found that under the No Project alternative, increases in traffic volumes and congestion are predicted for most intersection and roadway segments within the project area by Year 2025 due to cumulative growth. Existing lane geometrics and controls with no improvements would cause a cumulatively significant impact to traffic operations, level of service, and safety.

The environmental effects of a project will cause substantial adverse effects on human beings, either directly or indirectly.

Section 5.3 (Hazardous Materials/Risk of Upset) discusses the potential for human beings to be exposed to hazardous materials or conditions, both directly and indirectly. Section 5.5 (Noise) addresses the potential for human beings to be exposed to unacceptable noise levels, both from direct noise levels caused by the project and indirect noise effects. Section 5.6 (Air Quality) identifies emissions of air pollutants that the project would subject people to, both directly and indirectly. Section 5.2 (Visual Resources) evaluates direct and indirect adverse effects that may result from light and glare. Mitigation measures and project design features are identified to reduce identified significant impacts to these resource areas.