

### 5.1 INTRODUCTION

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

### 5.2 GROWTH-INDUCING IMPACTS

#### INTRODUCTION

The California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines Section 15126.2(d) requires that an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) evaluate the growth-inducing impacts of a proposed action. A growth-inducing impact is defined by the CEQA Guidelines as:

*...the ways 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...It must not be assumed that growth in an area is necessarily beneficial, detrimental, or of little significance to the environment.*

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. A project providing an increased water supply in an area where water service historically limited growth could be considered growth-inducing.

The State 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.

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.

#### COMPONENTS OF GROWTH

The timing, magnitude, and location of land development and population growth in a community or region are based on 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

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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.

### GROWTH EFFECTS OF THE PROJECT

Based on Government Code Section 65300, the General Plan is intended to serve as the overall plan for the physical development of the City of Elk Grove. While the General Plan does not specifically propose any development projects, it does regulate future population and economic growth of the city that would result in indirect growth-inducing effects.

Implementation of the proposed Elk Grove Boulevard/SR 99 Interchange Modification project is consistent with the existing City of Elk Grove General Plan Circulation Element. The specific environmental effects resulting from the proposed project are discussed in the environmental issue areas (Section 4.1 through Section 4.7). The proposed project would not develop agricultural land and would not introduce new public services or significantly expand existing public services. The proposed project would reconfigure portions of an existing freeway interchange to improve traffic circulation and accommodate increases in vehicle trips from surrounding planned development. No residential component is proposed which would result in a permanent increase in population. No commercial, industrial, or governmental enterprises are associated with the proposed project that could increase vehicle trips, add stationary air pollution sources, increase the risk of a hazardous substance release, or have an effect on local employment.

The roadway improvements included as part of the project would slightly increase capacity on local roads and intersections to accommodate predicted increases in traffic volumes. The slight increase in interchange traffic capacity is not expected to induce growth. The proposed project's roadway improvements would occur in an area of the city that is already developed and has all necessary infrastructure and utilities and, thus, would not provide access to a previously inaccessible area or be indirectly growth-inducing.

### 5.3 SIGNIFICANT IRREVERSIBLE ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS

CEQA Sections 21100(b)(2) and 21100.1(a) require that EIRs prepared for the adoption of a plan, policy, or ordinance of a public agency must include a discussion of significant irreversible environmental changes of project implementation. In addition, CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.2(c) describes irreversible environmental changes as:

*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.*

The Elk Grove General Plan EIR (SCH Number 2002062082) evaluated significant irreversible environmental effects associated with implementation of the adopted General Plan. That EIR identified that the conversion of undeveloped open space land areas to residential, commercial, industrial, office, public, and recreational uses would occur with implementation of the General Plan.

Development of the Elk Grove Boulevard/SR 99 Interchange Modification project would involve developing a small amount of land to freeway ramp improvements and minor changes to utility infrastructure in the immediate area of the interchange. This land is already identified for urban development on the General Plan Land Use Policy Map. Operation of the proposed project will not require a large commitment of renewable or non-renewable resources because it will not introduce any buildings or structures requiring energy consumption.

Development of the proposed project would irretrievably commit building materials and energy to the construction and maintenance of roads and infrastructure proposed. Renewable, nonrenewable, and limited resources that would likely be consumed as part of the construction of the proposed project would include, but are not limited to, oil, gasoline, lumber, sand and gravel, asphalt, water, steel, and similar materials.

Therefore, the proposed project is not anticipated to result in significant irreversible impacts comparable to those discussed in the Elk Grove General Plan EIR and discussed above.

### 5.4 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 of Elk Grove 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 project unavoidable adverse impacts identified in this EIR is provided below.

#### SECTION 4.7 TRAFFIC AND CIRCULATION

##### **Intersection Operations – Elk Grove Boulevard/East Stockton Boulevard and Elk Grove Boulevard/Southbound SR 99 Off-Ramp**

**Impact 4.7-1** Under 2010 project conditions the Elk Grove Boulevard/East Stockton Boulevard intersection will change from LOS D to LOS E in the AM peak hour and from LOS E to LOS F in the PM peak hour due to increased volumes at the intersection. Under 2010 project conditions, traffic delays at this intersection will also exceed the 5-second delay criteria under the City of Elk Grove's Traffic Impact Analysis Guidelines in both the AM and PM peak hours compared to No Project conditions. Under 2030 conditions, because the project routes additional traffic through the Elk Grove Boulevard/East Stockton Boulevard intersection, operations at this intersection worsen from LOS E to LOS F conditions during both peak hours. Also, the Year 2030 AM peak hour delay at the Elk Grove Boulevard/southbound SR 99 off-ramp intersection would be greater than 5 seconds with the project. These decreases in level of service and increases in delay exceed the thresholds for significant impacts under the City of Elk Grove's Traffic Impact Analysis Guidelines. Thus, the operational impacts at these two intersections are considered potentially significant.

No feasible mitigation measures have been identified for these significant impacts. Project alternatives considered but rejected, as described in Subsection 3.4 of Section 3.0, Project Description, of this Draft EIR were not able to provide design elements that would have

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mitigated the operational deficiencies at these intersections and presented potential additional operational deficiencies. Therefore, while implementation of the proposed project would result in substantial improvements to the operations of the project area and this segment of Elk Grove Boulevard as a whole, the impacts to two intersections from decreases in levels of service and increases in delay would remain **significant and unavoidable**.