

4.16 Less than Significant Environmental Factors

Section 15128 of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines requires an EIR briefly describe any possible effects that were determined not to be significant. The environmental factors discussed below are in response to the checklist questions listed in Appendix G of the CEQA Guidelines that were not discussed in the impact sections of the EIR.

Aesthetics/Visual Resources

All applicable thresholds pertinent to this issue are addressed in Section 4.1, *Aesthetics/Visual Resources*.

Agriculture and Forestry Resources

Thresholds of Significance

Appendix G of the State CEQA Guideline identifies the following criteria for determining whether a project's impacts would have a significant impact on agricultural resources:

1. Convert Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance (Farmland), as shown on the maps prepared pursuant to the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program of the California Resources Agency, to nonagricultural use;
2. Conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use, or a Williamson Act contract;
3. Conflict with existing zoning for, or cause rezoning of, forest land, timberland, or timberland zoned Timber Production;
4. Result in the loss of forest land or conversion of forest land to non-forest use; and/or
5. Involve other changes in the existing environment which, due to their location or nature, could result in conversion of Farmland, to non-agricultural use.

Thresholds 1, 2 and 5 are addressed in Section 4.2, *Agriculture and Forestry Resources*. Thresholds 3 and 4 are discussed below.

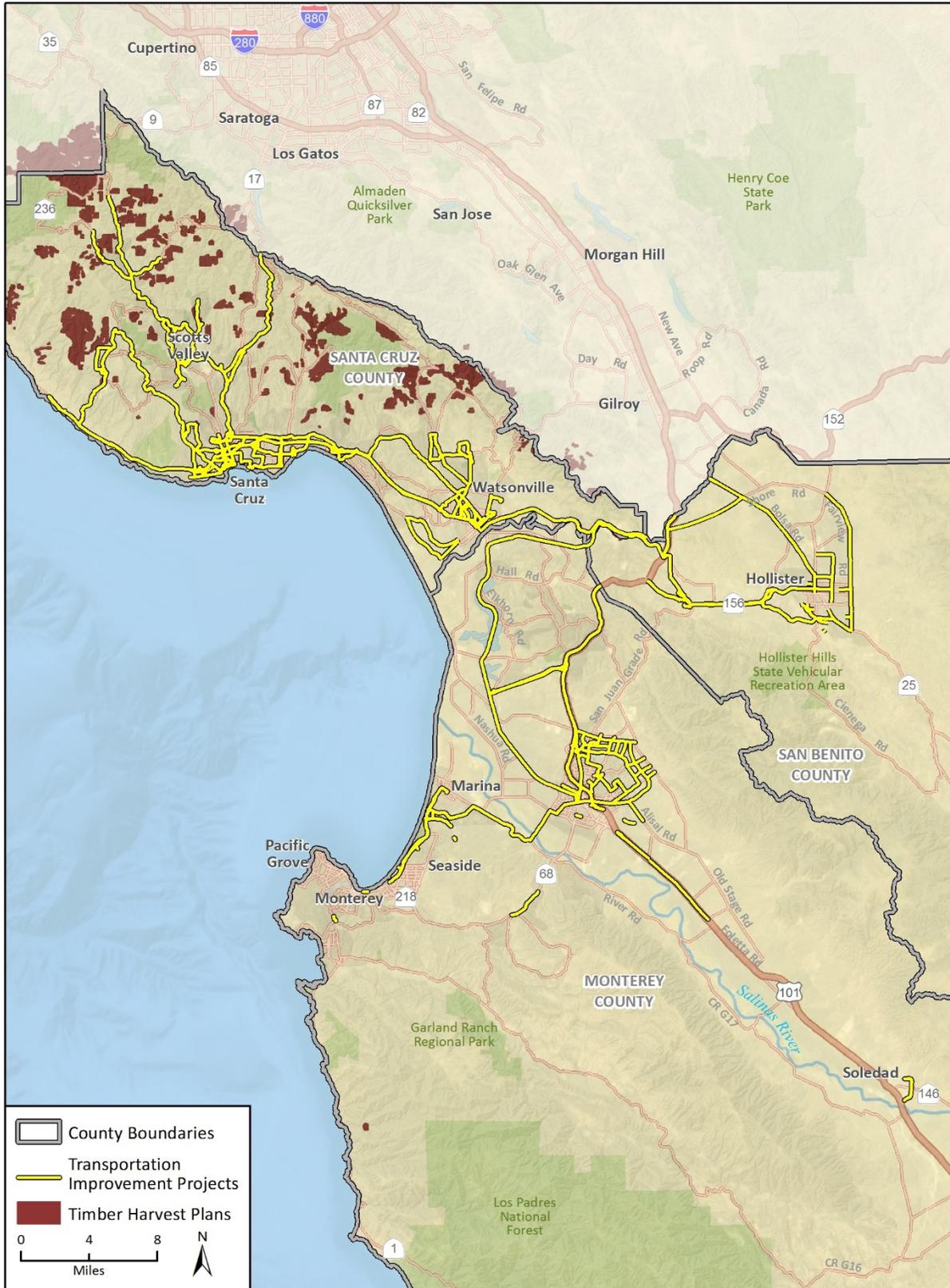
Assessment of Impacts

Threshold 3: Conflict with existing zoning for, or cause rezoning of, forest land to non-forest use

Threshold 4: Result in the loss of forest land or conversion of forest land to non-forest use

The majority of timber resources in the AMBAG region are located in Santa Cruz County. Figure 31 shows Timber Harvesting Plans (THP) in Monterey, San Benito and Santa Cruz counties. As shown, all but one THP (in southern Monterey County) are located in the mountains of Santa Cruz County (CAL FIRE 2012). Additionally, according to the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection's (CAL FIRE) Fire and Resource Assessment Program's (FRAP) 2010 Assessment, Santa Cruz County is the only county in the AMBAG region that contains land zoned with a Timber Production Zone designation (FRAP 2010). As of 2009, Santa Cruz County had approximately 115,000 acres of Timberland (FRAP 2010).

Figure 31 Plan Area Timber Harvesting Plans



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 Additional data provided by AMBAG 2017e; California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, 2017.

Fig 14 Plan Area Timber Harvesting Plans

The land use development pattern in Santa Cruz County, as shown in Figure 8 in Section 2.0, *Project Description*, would concentrate development within existing urbanized areas. Some development could occur within and around Scotts Valley and along Highway 9. Limited development could overlap with existing Timber Harvest Plans. However, these areas of overlap are primarily Town/Rural Residential and would not result in the loss of forest land. In addition, the SCS land use scenario does not rezone any existing land, including within the Santa Cruz mountains. Therefore, future development in areas zoned as forest land would be required to comply with applicable development standards and zoning regulations, and thus would by design comply with zoning for forest land and timberland.

Because land use strategies contained within the 2040 MTP/SCS would help to encourage growth in developed areas rather than a more dispersed land use pattern that could result in conversion of forest land, and because of the majority of timber areas are outside the identified land use development areas in Santa Cruz County, the impacts on existing zoning and land use designations for forest land and timberland and conversion of forest land, would be less than significant.

Air Quality and Health Impacts/Risks

All applicable thresholds pertinent to this issue are addressed in Section 4.3, *Air Quality and Health Impacts/Risks*.

Biological Resources

All applicable thresholds pertinent to this issue are addressed in Section 4.4, *Biological Resources*.

Cultural and Historic Resources

All applicable thresholds pertinent to this issue are addressed in Section 4.5, *Cultural and Historic Resources*.

Energy

All applicable thresholds pertinent to this issue are addressed in Section 4.6, *Energy*.

Geology and Soils

Thresholds of Significance

Appendix G of the State CEQA Guideline identifies the following criteria for determining whether a project's impacts would have a significant impact related to geology and soils:

1. Expose people or structures to potential substantial adverse effects, including the risk of loss, injury, or death involving rupture of a known earthquake fault, strong seismic ground-shaking, seismic-related ground failure, including liquefaction, or landslides;
2. Result in substantial soil erosion or the loss of topsoil;
3. Be located on a geologic unit or soil that is unstable, or that would become unstable as a result of the project, and potentially result in on- or off-site landslide, lateral spreading, subsidence, liquefaction, or collapse;
4. Be located on expansive soil, creating substantial risks to life or property; and/or
5. Have soils incapable of adequately supporting the use of septic tanks or alternative wastewater disposal systems where sewers are not available for the disposal of wastewater.

Thresholds 1 through 4 are discussed in Section 4.7, *Geology and Soils*. Threshold 5 is discussed below.

Assessment of Impacts

Threshold 5: Have soils incapable of adequately supporting the use of septic tanks or alternative wastewater disposal systems where sewers are not available for the disposal of wastewater

The 2040 MTP/SCS does not include transportation projects that would require the use of septic tanks or alternative waste water disposal systems. The expansion and/or improvement of streets, highways, transit facilities, airports and related transportation infrastructure would not include elements that would require wastewater treatment or otherwise necessitate the development of septic systems. Future development projects implementing the 2040 MTP/SCS land use would almost all connect to centralized wastewater infrastructure; the few development projects in rural areas requiring septic tanks or alternative wastewater disposal systems would comply with local regulatory requirements that assure soils would adequately support these systems. Therefore, impacts related to having soils incapable of adequately supporting the use of septic tanks and alternative wastewater disposal systems would be less than significant.

Greenhouse Gas Emissions/Climate Change

All applicable thresholds pertinent to this issue are addressed in Section 4.8, *Greenhouse Gas Emissions/Climate Change*.

Hazards and Hazardous Materials

All applicable thresholds pertinent to this issue are addressed in Section 4.9, *Hazards and Hazardous Materials*.

Hydrology and Water Quality

All applicable thresholds pertinent to this issue are addressed in Section 4.10, *Hydrology and Water Quality*.

Land Use

All applicable thresholds pertinent to this issue are addressed in Section 4.11, *Land Use*.

Mineral Resources

Thresholds of Significance

Appendix G of the State CEQA Guideline identifies the following criteria for determining whether a project's impacts would have a significant impact on mineral resources:

1. Result in the loss of availability of a known mineral resource that would be of value to the region and the residents of the state; and/or
2. Result in the loss of availability of a locally-important mineral resource recovery site delineated on a local general plan, specific plan or other land use plan.

Both thresholds are discussed below.

Assessment of Impacts

Threshold 1:	Result in the loss of availability of a known mineral resource that would be of value to the region and the residents of the state
Threshold 2:	Result in the loss of availability of a locally-important mineral resource recovery site delineated on a local general plan, specific plan or other land use plan

The 2040 MTP/SCS primarily involves modifications to existing roadways, including improvements related to intersections, safety and widening, as well as alternative transportation projects. In addition, a majority of future development would be infill and TOD and would be located within existing urbanized areas. Infill and TOD projects would not be located on sites with known mineral resources or locally important mineral resources. For projects not considered to be infill or TOD, local jurisdictions have policies to manage mineral resources through general plans and are required to respond to mineral resource recovery areas that have been designated MRZ-2 locations under the state's Surface Mining and Reclamation Act (SMARA). The MRZ-2 designation is an area where significant mineral deposits are present, or where it is judged that a high likelihood for their presence exists. Any projects located within MRZ-2 areas would be identified and impacts would be mitigated during the environmental review for project-specific impacts pertaining to mineral resources.

The Monterey County General Plan Conservation and Open Space Policy OS-2.1 states that the County shall protect on-site and off-site land uses that would incompatible with mineral extraction activities (Monterey County, 2010a). In San Benito County, Goal NCR-5 of the San Benito County 2035 General Plan (San Benito County, 2015a) intends to protect and support mineral resource extraction while avoiding land use conflicts and environmental impacts from current and historical mining activities. Policies and programs in the Conservation and Open Space Element of the Santa Cruz County General Plan and Local Coastal Program (Santa Cruz County, 1994) would ensure that conflicts are minimized between new development and mineral resource areas (Policy 5.16.4).

There are no projects included in the 2040 MTP/SCS that would directly result in the extraction, exploration, or digging for mineral resources, or prevent such activities, and therefore would not result in the loss of availability of minerals. Impacts pertaining to mineral resources would be less than significant.

Noise

All applicable thresholds pertinent to this issue are addressed in Section 4.12, *Noise*.

Public Services

Thresholds of Significance

Appendix G of the State CEQA Guideline identifies the following criteria for determining whether a project's impacts would have a significant impact on public services:

1. Result in substantial adverse physical impacts associated with the provision of new of physically altered governmental facilities, need for new or physically altered governmental facilities, the construction of which could cause significant environmental impacts, in order to maintain acceptable service ratios, response times or other performance objectives for any of the public services:

- a. Fire protection;
- b. Police protection;
- c. Schools;
- d. Parks; and/or
- e. Other public facilities.

All thresholds are discussed below.

Assessment of Impacts

Threshold 1: Result in substantial adverse physical impacts associated with the provision of new or physically altered governmental facilities, need for new or physically altered governmental facilities, the construction of which could cause significant environmental impacts, in order to maintain acceptable service ratios, response times or other performance objectives for fire and police protection, schools, parks, or other public facilities

Transportation projects identified within the 2040 MTP/SCS would not generate demand for public services, including fire and police protection, schools, or parks. In fact, certain improvements would result in more efficient traffic flow or improved road surfaces. Transportation projects that reduce levels of congestion and/or improve emergency access would improve response times for police, fire and emergency medical services.

Future development projects occurring as a result of the 2040 MTP/SCS could result in increased demand for public services that exceed existing service capabilities. In order to meet the increased demand for these facilities, existing facilities would require additional personnel and equipment to maintain adequate service levels. Depending on the exact timing and location of future development, it may become necessary to construct new facilities or modify existing facilities to maintain adequate capital capacity, equipment and personnel. However, facilities to support public services, such as fire and police stations, schools and parks, are planned in advance through the general plan process in each jurisdiction. As communities grow, the need for specific services would be assessed by each local jurisdiction and additional facilities would be constructed as needed. The construction of these facilities would be subject to project-specific CEQA review. In addition, implementation of new or physically altered public facilities to serve new land use development is incorporated into the SCS, the environmental effects of which are evaluated throughout Section 4 the EIR. Any significant associated with new or physically altered governmental facilities have already been disclosed previously in Section 4.

The general plans for each county in the AMBAG region include goals, policies and programs which intend to ensure the protection and that supply of services meets local demand. Cities have similar general plan policies. The Monterey County General Plan Public Service Element Goal PS-1 intends to ensure that adequate public facilities and services and the infrastructure to support new development are provided over the life of the General Plan (Monterey County, 2010a). Policies PS-1.1 and PS-1.2 are designed to ensure that improvement and financing is designed to accommodate new services, provide adequate public facilities and maintain acceptable levels of service. The San Benito County 2035 General Plan Public Facilities and Services Element Goal PFS-1 intends to provide residents and businesses quality, cost, effective and sustainable public facilities and services (San Benito County, 2015a). Policies PFS-1.1, PFS-1.2 and PFS-1.4 are designed to ensure that the County maintains adequate public facilities, identifies and finds solutions to support key public facility infrastructure, and to preserve, improve and replace facilities to maintain adequate levels of

service for existing and future development. The Parks, Recreation and Public Facilities Element of the Santa Cruz County General Plan and Local Coastal Program (Santa Cruz County, 1994) contains objectives related to Fire, Police and Public Services and Facilities which are designed to provide high levels of protection services, and promote the improvement of public services and facilities (Objectives 7.16, 7.17 and 7.27).

Population and Housing

All applicable thresholds pertinent to this issue are addressed in Section 4.13, *Population and Housing*.

Recreation

Thresholds of Significance

Appendix G of the State CEQA Guideline identifies the following criteria for determining whether a project's impacts would have a significant impact on recreation:

1. Increase the use of existing neighborhood and regional parks or other recreational facilities such that substantial physical deterioration of the facility would occur or be accelerated; and/or
2. Include recreational facilities or require construction or expansion of recreational facilities which might have an adverse physical effect on the environment.

Both thresholds are discussed below.

Assessment of Impacts

Threshold 1: Increase the use of existing neighborhood and regional parks or other recreational facilities such that substantial physical deterioration of the facility would occur or be accelerated
Threshold 2: Include recreational facilities or require construction or expansion of recreational facilities which might have an adverse physical effect on the environment

Transportation projects identified within the 2040 MTP/SCS would not generate demand for parks or recreation resources. Future development projects occurring as a result of the MTP/SCS would increase localized demand on parkland. Development of the individual projects in the 2040 MTP/SCS would be required on a project-by-project basis to pay development fees towards to the applicable jurisdiction. Since the passage of the 1975 Quimby Act (Government Code § 66477 *et seq.*), cities and counties have been authorized to adopt ordinances requiring that developers set aside land, donate conservation easements, or pay fees that can be used for purposes of acquiring parkland. In accordance with this regulation, each county in the AMBAG region requires that new residential development provide parkland and/or pay in lieu fees for the provision of parkland. For example, Monterey County General Plan Policy PS-11.10 requires that residential subdivision projects provide and maintain park and recreational land facilities, or pay in-lieu fees, in proportion to the extent of need created by the development (Monterey County, 2010b). San Benito County specifically requires that new development provide parkland at the rate of five acres per 1,000 residents (San Benito County, 2010c). Santa Cruz County Code Section 15.01.060 requires countywide dedication and/or fees associated with residential development. Cities also typically have similar types of policies in their general plans and/or Code of Ordinances. All future

development included in the 2040 MTP/SCS would be required to comply with these regulations, and would thus offset additional demand for parkland, minimizing the potential for substantial deterioration of existing recreational facilities.

It should also be noted that some of the active transportation projects included in the 2040 MTP/SCS would provide new recreational opportunities such as new Class I-III bike lanes, hiking trails, and improve access to recreational facilities. Significant environmental impacts of these active transportation projects, as well as any new or expanded recreational facilities to serve land use development under the SCS, have already been disclosed previously in Section 4 of this EIR.

Transportation and Circulation

Thresholds of Significance

1. Conflict with the following measures of effectiveness for the performance of the circulation system:
 - a. Total daily hours of vehicle delay;
 - b. Total peak period CVMT;
 - c. Percent of work trips that are 30 minutes or less by mode during peak period; and/or
 - d. Percent of jobs within 0.5 mile of a high quality transit stopAny increase in performance indicators a. and b. compared to existing baseline conditions would be considered a significant impact. Any decrease in performance measures c. and d. compared to existing baseline conditions would be considered a significant impact.
2. Conflict with an applicable congestion management program, including, but not limited to level of service standards and travel demand measures, or other standards established by the county congestion management agency for designated roads or highways;
3. Substantially disrupt:
 - a. Transit service; and/or
 - b. Bicycle and pedestrian facilities.
4. Result in any increase in total vehicle miles traveled on all freeways and roadways above existing conditions;
5. Result in a change in air traffic patterns, including either an increase in traffic levels or a change in location that results in substantial safety risks;
6. Substantially increase hazards due to a design feature (e.g., sharp curves or dangerous intersections) or incompatible uses (e.g., farm equipment); and/or
7. Result in inadequate emergency access.

Thresholds 1, 3 and 4 are addressed in Section 4.14, *Transportation and Circulation*. Thresholds 2, 5, 6 and 7 are discussed below.

Assessment of Impacts

Threshold 2: Conflict with an applicable congestion management program, including, but not limited to level of service standards and travel demand measures, or other standards established by the county congestion management agency for designated roads or highways

Threshold 2 pertains to the congestion management process, which pursuant to federal regulations, is a required part of the metropolitan transportation planning process for regions with one or more urbanized areas with a population of 200,000 or more. San Benito County has opted out of the congestion management planning process because it does not have a single urbanized area with a population of 200,000. Also, AMBAG does not require congestion management planning because the AMBAG region does not have a single urbanized area with a population of 200,000 or greater. However, within the AMBAG region, SBtCOG, SCCRTC and TAMC, all prepare and routinely update RTPs for their respective jurisdictions. The RTPs incorporate the basic principles of the congestion management process, specifically including a list of projects, goals and strategies to reduce and manage congestion on transportation facilities within their jurisdiction. AMBAG has made the congestion management process an integral part of the regional transportation planning process, including the 2040 MTP/SCS. The 2040 MTP/SCS, specifically Appendices B and C of the 2040 MTP/SCS, contains a compilation of the projects proposed in the RTPs prepared by TAMC, SBtCOG and SCCRTC. Thus, the 2040 MTP/SCS is consistent with the congestion management plans and programs of the RTPAs in the region, and impacts related to conflicting with applicable CMPs would be less than significant.

Threshold 5: Result in a change in air traffic patterns, including either an increase in traffic levels or a change in location that results in substantial safety risks

Threshold 6: Substantially increase hazards due to a design feature (e.g., sharp curves or dangerous intersections) or incompatible uses (e.g., farm equipment)

Threshold 7: Result in inadequate emergency access

The 2040 MTP/SCS does not include components that would result in changes in air traffic patterns that would result in substantial safety risks, and therefore this impact would be less than significant. To minimize safety risks, any development and subsequent planning decisions in proximity to airports would be subject to review under the State Aeronautics Act provided under Pub. Util. Code §§ 21167 et seq. Specific projects that may affect navigable airspace are also subject to FAA review, as outlined under 14 CFR Parts 77.5, 77.7 and 77.9.

Transportation projects included in the 2040 MTP/SCS would comply with federal, state and local regulatory requirements and design guidelines to minimize safety hazards, such as requirements for curve radii on curving road segments, maximum road grade/slope, and minimum separating distance between intersections and driveways. Therefore, this impact would be less than significant.

Existing regulations provide that any work within existing Caltrans rights of way would have to comply with Caltrans permitting requirements. This includes a traffic control plan that adheres to the standards set forth in the California Manual of Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD) (Caltrans 2014).¹⁰ As part of these requirements, there are provisions for coordination with local emergency services, training for flagmen for emergency vehicles traveling through the work zone, temporary lane separators that have sloping sides to facilitate crossover by emergency vehicles, and vehicle storage and staging areas for emergency vehicles. MUTCD requirements also provide for construction work during off-peak hours and flaggers. These requirements also include provisions for “Detour for Bike Lanes on Roads with Closure of One Travel Direction.” Measures similar to MUTCD requirements are typically applied to local projects, such as requiring at least two points of

¹⁰ Caltrans Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices available online at http://www.dot.ca.gov/hq/traffops/engineering/mutcd/ca_mutcd2014rev1.htm.

ingress/egress to residential developments for emergency access. For these reasons, impacts associated with inadequate emergency access would be less than significant.

Tribal Cultural Resources

All applicable thresholds pertinent to this issue are addressed in Section 4.15, *Tribal Cultural Resources*.

Utilities and Service Systems

Thresholds of Significance

Appendix G of the State CEQA Guideline identifies the following criteria for determining whether a project's impacts would have a significant impact on utilities and service systems:

1. Exceed wastewater treatment requirements of the applicable Regional Water Quality Control Board;
2. Require or result in the construction of new wastewater treatment or expansion of existing facilities, the construction of which could cause significant environmental effects;
3. Require or result in the construction of new storm water drainage facilities or expansion of existing facilities, the construction of which could cause significant environmental effects;
4. Have insufficient water supplies available to serve the project from existing entitlements and resources, or are new or expanded entitlements required;
5. Result in a determination by the wastewater treatment provider which serves or may serve the project that is has inadequate capacity to serve the projects projected demand in addition to the provider's existing commitments;
6. Not be served by a landfill with sufficient capacity to accommodate the projects solid waste disposal needs; and/or
7. Not comply with federal, state and local statutes and regulations related to solid waste

Thresholds 3 and 4 are discussed in Section 4.10, *Hydrology and Water Quality*.¹¹ Thresholds 1, 2, 5, 6 and 7 are discussed below.

Assessment of Impacts

Threshold 1:	Exceed wastewater treatment requirements of the applicable Regional Water Quality Control Board
Threshold 2:	Require or result in the construction of new wastewater treatment or expansion of existing facilities, the construction of which could cause significant environmental effects
Threshold 5:	Result in a determination by the wastewater treatment provider which serves or may serve the project that is has inadequate capacity to serve the projects projected demand in addition to the provider's existing commitments

¹¹ Thresholds 3 and 4 herein are identified as Thresholds 13, and 11 in Section 4.10, *Hydrology and Water Quality*, respectively.

The 2040 MTP/SCS transportation improvements would not lead to the construction of projects that include habitable residences, commercial buildings or other facilities that would generate permanent sources of new wastewater that requires treatment. Thus, transportation projects within the 2040 MTP/SCS would not exceed wastewater treatment requirements, require construction or expansion of wastewater treatment facilities or require a determination by a wastewater treatment provider.

The SCS land use scenario would promote infill and TOD development within urbanized areas. Although land use development projects would require wastewater treatment, this development would primarily occur at sites that are currently served by existing wastewater treatment facilities and connected to the local sewer services. However, some development projects may generate wastewater volumes that exceed the treatment capacity of existing wastewater treatment facilities. Depending on the exact timing and location of future development, it may become necessary to construct new wastewater treatment facilities or expand existing facilities to maintain adequate treatment capacity. Facility expansions or new treatment facilities would be subject to project-specific CEQA review. In addition, implementation of new or expanded wastewater facilities to serve new land use development is incorporated into the SCS, the environmental effects of which are evaluated throughout Section 4 the EIR. Any significant associated with new or expanded wastewater facilities have already been disclosed previously in Section 4..

Threshold 6:	Not be served by a landfill with sufficient capacity to accommodate the projects solid waste disposal needs
Threshold 7:	Not comply with federal, state and local statutes and regulations related to solid waste

Construction activities would generate solid waste that would need to be disposed at local landfills, and individual contributions on a project-by-project basis would be analyzed under planning review prior to project implementation. Impacts associated with transportation infrastructure projects would be temporary and reduced by compliance with the California Green Building Code and Senate Bill 1016, which requires that construction operations recycle a minimum of 50 percent of waste generated. Similarly, land use development projects would also be required to comply with a 50 percent diversion rate, as required by California's Integrated Waste Management Act of 1989 (State Assembly Bill [AB] 939) and a future 75 percent diversion established by AB 341 in October 2011. Compliance with these requirements would ensure that solid waste generated from land use development would be minimized the extent practical, and that diversion rates would increase into the future, as development included in the 2040 MTP/SCS is built out.

For the non-diverted waste generated by projects included in the 2040 MTP/SCS, solid waste would require disposal in area landfills. There are over five active operating solid waste facilities in Santa Cruz County, three in San Benito County and 15 in Monterey County. These landfills are adequate for the existing solid waste generated in the AMBAG region, and include additional unused capacity, the volume of which varies by specific facility. In addition, AB 939 requires that all California counties provide at least 15 years of ongoing landfill capacity. With this long-range landfill capacity planning, as well as consideration of project-by-project demand for solid waste facilities during the planning review process, adequate landfill capacity would exist or be constructed to accommodate the solid waste generated by individual projects. Construction of new solid waste facilities or expansions of existing landfills to increase capacity would be subject to project-specific CEQA review. Solid waste impacts would therefore be less than significant.

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