

8.0 INTRODUCTION

This document provides chapters to be added to the Draft Program Environmental Impact Report (PEIR) to comprise the Final PEIR for Connect SoCal, also known as the 2020-2045 Regional Transportation Plan / Sustainable Communities Strategy (“Plan” or “Project”). This document, together with the Draft PEIR and its technical appendices, comprise the Final PEIR. The document has been prepared by the Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) in accordance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).

In accordance with *CEQA Guidelines* Section 15132, the Final PEIR consists of the following:

- (a) The Draft PEIR or a revision of the draft;
- (b) Comments and recommendations received on the Draft PEIR either verbatim or in summary;
- (c) A list of persons, organizations, and public agencies commenting on the Draft PEIR;
- (d) SCAG’s responses to significant environmental points raised in the review and consultation process; and
- (e) Any other information added by SCAG (including minor changes to the PEIR).

A Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program is also required, and will be a separate document that must be adopted by SCAG upon certification of the PEIR, pursuant to Public Resources Code Section 21081.6 and *CEQA Guidelines* Section 15097.

The evaluation and response to comments are important elements to the CEQA process, as they allow the following: (1) the opportunity to review and comment on the methods of analysis contained within the Draft PEIR; (2) the ability to detect any omissions which may have occurred during preparation of the Draft PEIR; (3) the ability to check for accuracy of the analysis contained within the Draft PEIR; (4) the ability to share expertise; (5) the ability to discover public concerns.

This document provides revisions to the Draft PEIR made in response to comments, staff review, and/or changes to the proposed project. These revisions also correct, clarify, and amplify the text of the Draft PEIR, as appropriate, and do not alter the conclusions of the Draft PEIR.

8.1 CEQA PROCESS

Notice of Preparation and Public Scoping

A Notice of Preparation (NOP) for this PEIR was issued on January 23, 2019, by SCAG for a 30-day public review period. Two scoping meetings were held on February 13, 2019, at 3:00 pm to 5:00 pm, and at 6:30 pm to 8:00 pm. The meetings were convened in SCAG's main office in Los Angeles, with videoconferencing available at SCAG regional offices in Imperial, Orange, Riverside, and San Bernardino Counties. Videoconferencing was made available at two additional locations in the Cities of Palm Desert (Coachella Valley Association of Governments) and Palmdale. The purpose of these meetings was to provide early consultation for the public to express concerns about the project, acquire information, and make recommendations on issues to be addressed in the PEIR.

The NOP was sent to the State Clearinghouse on January 23, 2019; posted with the County Clerks for the six counties in the SCAG region; and distributed to various federal, state, regional and local government agencies, and other interested agencies, organizations, and individuals. The NOP was made available on SCAG's website at <https://www.connectsoocal.org/Documents/PEIR/NOP-PEIR-ConnectSoCal.pdf>. The NOP was published in 12 newspapers, including the Los Angeles Times, and additional newspapers that address the large geographic reach and diverse population within the SCAG region.

SCAG also conducted 28 open house workshops on the Plan between June and July 2019. The goals of these events were to share the purpose of Connect SoCal, introduce and provide information on policies and strategies under consideration, describe the performance outcomes of the different policy choices, and receive input from participants.

Notice of Availability of the Draft PEIR

The Draft PEIR was submitted to the State Clearinghouse Office of Planning and Research and circulated for public review beginning on December 9, 2019, and ending on January 24, 2020 (SCH # 20199011061), and a Notice of Completion was posted with each of the County Clerks for the six counties in the SCAG region. The PEIR was circulated primarily using electronic mail to more than 2,700 interested parties. The PEIR was mailed directly to approximately 200 interested parties, including federal, state, regional and local agencies, organizations, and major libraries in the region using the U.S. Postal Service certified mail service. Additionally, SCAG placed copies of the Draft PEIR at the offices of SCAG and electronic copies at the 56 public libraries throughout the region and posted the Draft PEIR on its website.

The PEIR was available at the following SCAG Regional Office locations:

SCAG Main Office
900 Wilshire Boulevard, Suite 1700,
Los Angeles, CA 90017

SCAG Riverside County Regional Office
3403 10th Street, Suite 805
Riverside, CA 92501

SCAG Imperial County Regional Office
1405 N. Imperial Avenue, Suite 1
El Centro, CA 92243

SCAG San Bernardino County Regional Office
1170 West 3rd Street, Suite 140
San Bernardino, CA 92410

SCAG Orange County Regional Office
600 South Main Street, Suite 906
Orange, CA 92868

A public workshop was held on January 9, 2020, from 2:00 pm to 3:30 pm at SCAG's Los Angeles Office located at 900 Wilshire Blvd., Ste 1700. This workshop was also a webinar which was available for the public via internet.

Responses to Comments on the Draft PEIR

CEQA Guidelines Section 15088 requires SCAG to evaluate comments on significant environmental issues received from parties that have reviewed the Draft PEIR and to prepare a written response. As stated in *CEQA Guidelines* Sections 15132 and 15362, the Final PEIR must contain the comments received on the Draft PEIR, either verbatim or in summary, a list of persons commenting, and the response of the Lead Agency to the comments received.

A total of 53 comment letters were received by SCAG during the comment period. Among the 53 comment letters, there were 262 unique comments directly related to the Draft PEIR.¹ The responses do not significantly alter the Project, change the Draft PEIR's significance conclusions, or provide new information regarding substantial adverse environmental effects not already analyzed in the Draft PEIR. Instead, the information presented in the responses to comments "merely clarifies or amplifies or makes insignificant modifications" in the Draft PEIR, as is permitted by *CEQA Guidelines* Section 15088.5(b).

In the course of responding to comments, certain portions of the Draft PEIR have been modified slightly for further clarification. The comments and modifications have not identified the existence of: (1) a significant new environmental impact that would result from the Project or an adopted mitigation measure; (2) a substantial increase in the severity of an environmental impact; (3) a feasible project alternative or mitigation measure not adopted that is considerably different from others analyzed in the Draft PEIR that would clearly lessen the significant environmental impacts of the Project; or (4)

¹ SCAG received a total 327 comments, 66 of which were considered redundant (i.e., cross-referencing comments from other local jurisdictions or agencies). A complete list and copy of comments are provided in the Final PEIR.

information that indicates the public was deprived of a meaningful opportunity to review and comment on the Draft PEIR (*CEQA Guidelines*, subdivision 15088.5(a). Consequently, SCAG finds the clarifications made to the Draft EIR in the Final EIR do not collectively or individually constitute significant new information within the meaning of PRC, section 21092.1 and *CEQA Guidelines*, section 15088.5. Recirculation of the Draft PEIR or any portion thereof, is, therefore, not required.

The written responses to commenting public agencies shall be provided at least ten (10) days prior to the certification of the Draft PEIR (*CEQA Guidelines* § 15088(b)). SCAG provided the Final PEIR to commenters on **March 27, 2020**, and made the document available for review on the Project web site at: <https://www.connectsocial.org/Pages/Final-2020-PEIR.aspx>

Final PEIR Certification and Approval

Prior to considering the Project for approval, SCAG, as the Lead Agency, will review and consider if the information presented in the Final PEIR:

- (a) Has been completed in compliance with CEQA;
- (b) Has been presented to the SCAG Regional Council as the decision-making body for the Lead Agency, which reviewed and considered it prior to approving the Project; and
- (c) Reflects SCAG's independent judgment and analysis (*CEQA Guidelines* Section 15090)

If and when the Final PEIR is certified, the SCAG Regional Council may proceed to consider Plan approval (*CEQA Guidelines* § 15090). Prior to approving the Project, SCAG must make written findings and adopt statements of overriding considerations for each unmitigated significant environmental effect identified in the Final PEIR in accordance with Sections 15091 and 15093 of the *CEQA Guidelines*.

If the Final PEIR is certified followed by the Plan approval, SCAG will file a Notice of Determination (NOD) with the Office of Planning and Research and the County Clerks of Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino, Ventura, and Imperial (*CEQA Guidelines* § 15094).

8.2 REFINEMENTS TO THE PLAN SINCE PUBLICATION OF THE DRAFT PEIR

Modifications to the Draft Connect SoCal Project List

The Draft Connect SoCal Project List has been refined/updated since the publication of the Draft Plan and Draft PEIR. Generally, changes to the project list are one of the following:

- New projects that were not included in the Connect SoCal Project list.

- Existing projects in the Connect SoCal Project list that were requested to be removed.
- Existing projects in the Connect SoCal Project list that have:
 - a revised description (including completion year, cost or minor change to scope), and/or
 - a revised schedule.

SCAG received input on the Draft Project List from six County Transportation Commissions (CTCs) as part of the Connect SoCal update and finalization process. During the comment period for the Draft Plan, input was received from the six CTC's regarding modifications to the Final Project List. The provided updates reflect the latest Connect SoCal project information at the time and are part of the finalization process by SCAG and the CTCs for the Final Connect SoCal Project List. Connect SoCal includes over 4,000 individual capital projects and programs across the region across all modes of transportation over the next 25 years. During the public review period, SCAG received requests from the county transportation commissions to modify more than 170 projects (which represents less than 1 percent of total projects). Projects removed were due to duplicative entries. Notable projects that were removed between the Draft and Final Connect SoCal are as follows:

- 1TR103 – California High-Speed Rail Phase 1 (Duplicative)
- 1H0101 – Add 1 HOV lane SR-14
- 4M0714 – I-15 Mohave Interchange
- LA0G1099 – High Desert Corridor (Duplicative)
- LA0G901- Historic LA Streetcar

New projects that were added between the Draft and Final Connect SoCal are as follows:

- 1200P005 – Terminal Access Improvement on Harbor Scenic Drive
- 2200G001 – BNSF Line
- 200T004 – Replacement of 40 Buses
- 3200L300 – Railroad Crossing Safety Improvements
- 3200P200 – Metrolink low/zero emission technology trains
- 4A07004 – Widen US-395 from I-15 to SR 18 (Palmdale Rd)
- ORA120507 – Widen Route 74 (Ortega Highway)

Accordingly, SCAG re-ran the travel demand and emission model with the updated transportation network. The plan outcome from these revisions resulted in incremental improvement in VMT, delay and economic metrics which are discussed under the changes to Performance Measures section of the Final Connect SoCal Plan.

Improvements to Performance Outcome

Comments were received from the California Air Resources Board (ARB) on performance outcomes and the GHG target analysis. In response, SCAG added data for the years 2020 and 2035 for the VMT per capita performance measure to better align with state GHG reduction target years in the main book as well as Performance Measures Technical Report. In addition, final modeling data results from both the SCAG Regional Travel Demand Model and the Scenario Planning Model offered improved performance in some significant areas of Connect SoCal, including VMT per capita (5.0% reduction from 4.2%) and daily delay per capita (25.7% reduction from 22.4%). Several of the economic opportunity indicators also were improved by the final model runs, with the benefit/cost ratio for Connect SoCal investments increasing from 1.54 to 2.06, and the annual number of new jobs generated by improved regional economic competitiveness increasing from 195,500 to 264,500.

Adjustments to the Sustainable Communities Strategy (SCS)

SCAG received many comments related to the SCS. Several comments raised concerns regarding housing affordability, climate change and certain GHG reduction strategies. Other comments sought clarity on the Connect SoCal Growth Vision. In response to comments, the Sustainable Communities Strategy has updated SCAG's Growth Vision and modified land use patterns in the Sustainable Communities Strategy, which resulted in adjustments to HQTAs in the region.

SCAG used the performance of each scenario as well as input gathered through the public workshops to refine the final growth vision for the Plan. This vision aims to increase mobility options and reduce the need for residents to drive by locating housing, jobs, and transit closer together. The final Plan focuses growth within jurisdictions near destinations and mobility options and promotes an improved jobs-housing balance to reduce commute times.

SCAG revised forecasted development pattern, by initiating a peer review with local jurisdictions regarding population, household, and employment growth at the sub-jurisdictional level (i.e. transportation analysis zone (TAZ) level) prior to the release of the draft Connect SoCal plan. Technical refinements were made to the Forecasted Development Pattern in Connect SoCal that included adjustments to growth due to entitlements and maximum planned capacities. "Locally envisioned

growth” was used in some instances to further Connect SoCal’s Growth Vision of reducing the need for residents to drive by locating housing, jobs and transit closer together - helping to assure that Connect SoCal’s land use and growth strategies recognize local input, promote sustainable transportation options, and support equitable and adaptable communities.

The revised forecasted development pattern directs growth to Priority Growth Areas (PGAs) near existing and planned transit, within existing job centers, in communities with existing and planned infrastructure to support more walkability and use of alternative transportation modes, and in areas identified for jurisdictional expansion (i.e. spheres of influence). The final growth vision includes entitled projects, reflects the local input growth totals and follows currently adopted local plans to allocate growth within the existing general plan maximums. Growth through 2045 was reduced in and redirected from constrained areas (e.g. very high severity fire risk areas, farmland, protected open space, wildlife corridors, areas at risk for near-term sea level rise, flood hazard areas, etc.). No changes were made to the underlying policies or strategies presented in the Draft Connect SoCal which would constitute a major change in the Project Description.

Modifications to Transportation Finance

The Connect SoCal proposes investment of approximately \$639 billion to maintain, operate and improve the region’s multimodal transportation system through 2045. Approximately \$500 billion is expected to be available through existing funding sources projected out to 2045. The balance of almost \$139 billion is expected to be available through implementation of innovative funding sources proposed in the Connect SoCal, which will require significant actions at the local, regional, state and federal level in the coming decade through collaborative efforts.

Many comments were focused on clarifying details on the financial model, implementation guidelines for new revenue sources and need for more evaluation, including assurances on distribution of funds and consideration of impacts of fees on different segments of the population. In response to comments, text clarifications were made regarding assumptions for the financial model and guidelines for implementation of new revenue sources. Modifications to transportation finance does not affect the environmental analysis as it serves to provide the reader background information on funding sources rather than information on physical changes to the environment.

Clarifications on Transportation Conformity

On the Transportation Conformity Analysis Technical Report, in response to comments, a new challenge titled “Meeting Federal Air Quality Standards” has been added to Chapter 2 of the Connect SoCal Plan to

highlight the challenge for the South Coast region to meet federal air quality standards by the near-term statutory deadline, its potential impacts, and the need for a comprehensive and coordinated regional solution. In the interim, U.S. EPA recently allowed for the use of emissions adjustment factors proposed by ARB for EMFAC 2014 (which is the emissions model used by SCAG to demonstrate transportation conformity of the Draft Connect SoCal prior to issuance of SAFE Rules by U.S. EPA) to comply with SAFE Rule Part 1 for transportation conformity determination in California. The Final Plan uses adjusted factors with respect to air quality emissions and meets the required conformity tests pursuant to the proposed adjustment factors for the EMFAC 2014.

8.3 EFFECTS OF THE REFINEMENTS TO THE PLAN

The SCAG models described above are used to provide gross estimates of regional environmental parameters (in particular VMT, criteria pollutant emissions and GHG emissions). However, the inputs to these models are subject to variability (location and density of land uses, travel patterns, fuel make up, pricing assumptions and many more). Because of this, minor changes to assumptions result in minor changes to modeling results and are not statistically significant. As noted above, SCAG has made several refinements to Connect SoCal including to land use patterns, transportation projects and policies (alternatives would be similarly affected). None of these refinements result in substantial changes to the information presented in the Draft PEIR, including modeling results. Nonetheless, below is a summary description of each topic area analyzed within the PEIR and how the changes described above would change.

Aesthetics and Views

As described above, the Final Plan includes generally the same transportation network as the Draft Plan (with the exceptions noted above), and therefore would have similar regional impacts on aesthetics and views. The Final Plan refines the focus of growth within jurisdictions near destinations and mobility options and promote an improved jobs-housing balance to reduce commute times, the potential for scenic resources conflicts are generally within rural and minimally developed areas. As such, the regional impacts would be similar to and within the range of impacts already analyzed in the Draft PEIR.

Regional-scale impacts to scenic resource and vista points would be the same under the Final Plan as with the Draft Plan. None of the analysis presented in Section 3.1 would be changed as a result of the refinements to the Plan. At the regional level, impacts would remain significant and unavoidable. The minor modifications to the Plan would have no impact on cumulative Aesthetic impacts at the regional level because the changes are minor and at the sub jurisdictional level.

Agriculture and Forestry

Based on the refinements to the Plan, the Estimated Maximum Direct Potential Loss of Important Agricultural Land as shown in Table 3.2-4 could change slightly, but at the regional scale such impacts would be negligible.

Air Quality

Region-wide criteria pollutant emissions under the Final Plan would generally go down due to the better performance of the Plan overall. The revisions reflected in the Final Plan would not change the conclusions presented in the Draft PEIR. The Final Plan air quality modeling addresses both the refinements to the Plan and ARB's EMFAC2014 off-model adjustment factors² necessary to account for the emission impacts of The Safer Affordable Fuel-Efficient (SAFE) Vehicles Rule Part One: One National Program effective November 26, 2019 (the rollback of California's waiver).³ The numbers represent a conservative scenario, if the California waiver is not rolled back, emissions would be similar to or better than the results presented in the Final Plan. Even using the conservative assumptions, the calculated emissions would not be substantially different from those presented in the Draft PEIR. These minor changes would not affect the findings of the PEIR, and overall impacts related to criteria pollutants would remain significant and unavoidable.

Biological Resources

The transportation network for the Final Plan would be similar to the network in the Draft Plan, therefore the regional-scale direct impacts of the Final Plan to biological resources would be the same as those identified in the Draft PEIR. The impacts to natural vegetation, sensitive species and communities, habitat connectivity, and riparian and wetland areas, would also be the same. The acres of critical habitat would be similar to the amount impacted in Tables 3.4-13, Acres of Critical Habitat for Listed Species Potentially Affected by Connect SoCal Major Transportation Projects. The number of listed plant species and wildlife species affected by the final Plan would be similar to those provided in Table 3.4-14 Records of Listed Plant Species within 500 Feet of Connect SoCal Projects and Table 3.4-15 Records of Listed Wildlife Species within 500 Feet of Connect SoCal Projects. Similarly, acres of sensitive and riparian habitat within 500 feet of Connect SoCal projects (Table 3.4-16) would not substantively change based on the modifications described above. Miles of blueline streams and acres of federally protected waterways within 500 feet of Connect SoCal Projects would also not substantively change (Table 3.4-17, Table 3.4-18,

² https://ww3.arb.ca.gov/msei/emfac_off_model_adjustment_factors_final_draft.pdf

³ <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/FR-2019-09-27/pdf/2019-20672.pdf>

and Table 3.4-19). Lastly acres used for wildlife movement (Table 3.4-20) would be minimally affected by the changes in the Final Plan. The changes in the Final Plan would not impact acres subject to HCP or NCPs.

Cultural Resources

The Final Plan would have a similar transportation network as compared to the Draft Plan, therefore, regional-scale direct impacts to cultural resources, including impacts to historical and archaeological, resources would be similar to those identified in the Draft PEIR. The Plan would continue to include regional land use and transportation strategies that focus new growth in urbanized areas. Many urbanized areas are older urban or suburban town centers where structures of architectural or historical significance are likely to be located. Therefore, regional-scale impacts would not change. Transportation projects considered in the Plan would continue to have the potential to impact the nearly 100,000 archaeological resources in the SCAG region (Table 3.5-1). The Plan would continue to focus growth in urban areas and impacts would not substantively change.

Energy

The changes to the Final Plan would result in minor changes to the energy numbers presented in the Section 3.6, Energy. These estimates of energy consumption are based on available consumption factors which are reasonably expected to change substantially over the coming years with increased focus on conservation and efficiency. The minor changes reflected in the Final Plan would not substantially affect the numbers presented in the Final PEIR.

Geology and Soils

Direct regional-scale impacts to geological resources in the Final Plan would be similar to those of the Draft Plan. Implementation of the Plan would result in projects exposed to both direct and indirect effects of seismic activities compared to existing conditions (which is not an impact under CEQA). The Plan would neither cause nor exacerbate existing geologic hazards, including the likelihood of fault rupture. This condition exists throughout the SCAG region as it is a seismically active area.

Regarding impacts related to soil suitability, erosion and stability, because projects would be required to comply with existing state and local jurisdiction permitting, regulatory, and grading processes as well as the application of BMPs, regional-scale impacts would be the same as identified in the Draft PEIR.

The potential regional-scale direct impacts on paleontological resources related to implementation of transportation projects and development projects anticipated to occur under the Plan and presented in the Draft PEIR would not change as a result of on the Plan refinements.

Greenhouse Gases

The Plan refinements and adjustments described above would result in minimal changes to the regional-scale GHG emission estimates presented in the Draft PEIR. Table 3.8-5, Greenhouse Gas Emissions from All On-Road Vehicles in the SCAG Region (Million Metric Tons per Year), CO₂ would be reduced slightly for light and medium-duty vehicles and heavy-duty vehicles. Similarly, total transportation section emissions would be slightly lower (Table 3.8-7). Overall, on-road-only emission would decrease based on the Final Plan. The Plan would continue to achieve GHG reduction targets of 8 and 19 percent (Table 3.8-10). For Table 3.8-11, Residents and VMT (2019 and 2045), the reduction in VMT per capita would be 8.4 percent for light duty vehicles and 4.8 percent for all vehicles. This is similar to numbers presented in the Draft Plan. As stated in Section 3.8, Greenhouse Gases, CARB has indicated that even if all MPOs meet their regional SB 375 GHG targets, the state would not be able to meet the statewide GHG reduction goals of AB 32, SB 32, and the Scoping Plan. As recognized by CARB, MPO's do not have land use authority to implement additional VMT reductions. Furthermore, SCAG has no control or authority over the other key sectors (e.g., energy, industry, water, waste and agriculture) in meeting the AB 32, SB 32, and Scoping Plan targets. Assuming existing available emission factors, GHG emissions in the SCAG region are not on track to achieve targets identified in AB 32, SB 32 and the Scoping Plan. This would continue to be the case with the Final Plan.

Hazardous Materials

The Final Plan includes the same land use strategies that encourage infill and redevelopment and generally the same transportation network; therefore, transportation of hazardous materials would be similar to those described in the Draft PEIR. Regional-scale impacts related to the routine transport, use, or disposal of hazardous materials, the risk of upset of hazardous materials, risk of disturbing contaminated sites during construction, and the risk of release of hazardous materials within one-quarter mile of a school would not change from what is described in the Draft PEIR.

Hydrology and Water Quality

The Final Plan would have generally the same transportation projects and land use strategies as the Draft Plan, and as such, hydrology impacts including violation of water quality standards, potential to decrease groundwater supplies, alternation of an existing drainage pattern, and flood hazards would generally be

the same. While Plan refinements would result in an incremental increase in the amount greenfields converted to urban uses, at the regional level the impacts would not substantively change from what is described in the Draft PEIR.

Land Use

The transportation strategies in the Plan, such as emphasis on complete streets and TDM strategies would continue to have limited potential for dividing established communities because they are generally expected to occur in established communities. Many of these strategies (i.e., bike lanes, pedestrian access) improve connectivity. As land gets converted from urban or agricultural uses, there would continue to be the potential for infrastructure or land developments to divide existing communities. This impact would not substantially change with the refinements to the Plan described above.

With regard to conflict with existing plans, land use policies and strategies in the Plan would continue to encourage development of underutilized areas (infill, etc.). Development patterns, would continue to be supported by transportation investments that emphasize system preservation and enhancement, active transportation, and land use integration, and are generally consistent with local land use plans, goals, and policies calling for higher density, compact, mixed-use development that may be served by high-quality transit, bicycle and pedestrian improvements. There would continue to be the potential for inconsistencies between SCAG's land use strategies and local planning documents that could potentially lead to physical environmental impacts. The refinements to the Plan would not substantively change the analysis presented in the PEIR.

Mineral Resource

Change to transportation projects contained in the Plan and refinements to growth patterns would continue to require substantial amounts of aggregate resources for construction purposes, continuing to constitute a significant impact. The refinements to the Plan would not substantively change the analysis presented in the PEIR.

Noise

The Final Plan includes similar transportation projects and strategies as well as land use strategies as the Draft Plan. As a result, the Final Plan would have similar noise impacts as the Draft Plan. The potential for generation of substantial temporary or permanent increases in ambient noise or vibration would be similar to the Draft Plan, since the Final Plan would have generally the same transportation projects as the Draft Plan. The growth pattern is also similar to the Draft Plan meaning that generally the same

impacts would occur and for a regional scale analysis, the Plan refinements would not substantively change the analysis.

Regarding aviation noise, the Final Plan would have a similar transportation network and growth pattern as the Draft Plan, as a result, it is expected that sensitive receptors would continue to be impacted by airport noise and as for the draft Plan, the Final Plan would not exacerbate this impact.

Population and Housing

Minor modifications were made to the population, households and employment numbers. Some of the numbers were revised due to rounding and other refinements during the public review process. The analysis of impacts focuses on the Plan's potential to result in unplanned population growth. The Final Plan continues to include land use strategies and transportation projects and supporting strategies that generally encourage population growth in urbanized areas and HQTAs. Generally, most jurisdictions have started planning for increases in density in urban areas and the Plan builds on local input (and is not intended to result in re-designation of areas where such re-designation is not approved by the local agency). There continues to be the potential for the Plan's strategies to influence population growth in areas where local general plans have not yet been updated to reflect such growth.

Regarding potential to displace housing, construction of transportation projects that require expansion of existing or designation of new ROWs would continue to have the potential to result in the displacement of existing people and housing, necessitating the construction of replacement housing. The Final Plan continues to include generally the same transportation network and growth pattern, as such impacts would remain the same.

Public Services (Fire, Police, Schools, Libraries)

As described in Sections 3.15-1, 3.15-2, 3.15-3 and 3.15-4, impacts to public services are largely population driven. As described under the preceding section (Population and Housing), only minor refinements to the population forecasts occurred. The analysis presented in the public services sections is regional in nature and generally discusses the potential for impacts to occur as a result of the increased population. As the population numbers have not substantively changed, the analysis presented in Sections 3.15-1, 3.15-2, 3.15-3 and 3.15-4 remains the same.

Parks and Recreation

As described in Sections 3.16, impacts to parks and recreational facilities are largely population driven. As described under the preceding section (Population and Housing), only minor refinements to the population forecasts occurred. The analysis presented in the parks and recreation section is regional in nature and generally discusses the potential for impacts to occur as a result of the increased population resulting in overuse of existing parks, primarily in urban areas. As the population numbers have not substantively changed, the analysis presented in Section 3.16 remains the same.

Transportation

As described above, the refinements to the Plan have generally resulted in incrementally better Plan performance. These changes are fully described in the Plan. These minor changes do not substantively change the analysis presented in the PEIR.

Tribal Cultural Resources

Transportation projects and anticipated growth under the Plan would continue to have the potential to cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of tribal cultural resources in the SCAG region, defined in Public Resources Code section 21074, as either a site, feature, place, cultural landscape that is geographically defined in terms of the size and scope of the landscape, sacred place, or object with cultural value to a California Native American tribe. The Final Plan would have a similar transportation network and growth pattern as the Draft Plan. Therefore, the impacts would be the same as in the PEIR.

Utilities and Service Systems

As described in Sections 3.19-1, 3.19-2, and 3.19-3, impacts to utilities and service systems are largely population driven. As described under the preceding section (Population and Housing), only minor refinements to the population forecasts occurred. The analysis presented in the utilities and service systems sections is regional in nature and generally discusses the potential for physical impacts to occur as a result of the increased population. As the population numbers have not substantively changed, the analysis presented in Sections 3.19-1, 3.19-2, and 3.19-3 remains the same.

Wildfire

Transportation projects and anticipated development projects would continue to be located in wildfire-prone areas which could continue to potentially exacerbate wildfire risks and thereby expose project occupants to pollutant concentrations from wildfires or the uncontrolled spread of wildfires, particularly

those populations living down wind of the fire. The Final Plan has generally the same transportation and growth pattern, therefore, impacts would remain the same as in the PEIR.

Cumulative Impacts

At the regional level, the cumulative analysis of impacts would not change. The potential for the Plan to combine with other regional plans to create impacts would remain the same as described in the PEIR. The Final Plan results in minor modifications that do not substantively change the analysis of any of the impact areas (as described above). Therefore, cumulative impacts would remain the same as in the PEIR.

8.4 CONTENT OF THE FINAL PEIR

As discussed above, the primary intent of the Final PEIR is to provide a forum to air and address comments pertaining to the analysis contained within the Draft PEIR. Pursuant to *CEQA Guidelines* Section 15088, SCAG has reviewed and addressed all comments received on the Draft PEIR by the comment period deadline. Included within the Final PEIR are the written comments that were submitted during the public comment period.

In order to adequately address the comments provided by interested agencies and the public in an organized manner, this Final PEIR includes the following chapters and appendices:

Section 8.0, Introduction: This chapter provides a brief introduction to the Final PEIR and its contents.

Section 9.0, Responses to Comments: This chapter provides a list of commenting agencies, organizations, and individuals. Responses to all comments on the Draft PEIR are also included in this chapter. Some of the comment letters received on the Draft PEIR also provide comments on the Plan (not the anticipated environmental impacts). These Plan-related comments are addressed separately. Where changes were necessary to the PEIR, the changes were incorporated into this section.

Section 10.0, Corrections and Additions: This chapter provides a list of corrections and additions to the Draft PEIR. None of the changes significantly impact the conclusions presented in the Draft PEIR.

The Final PEIR also includes the previously circulated Draft PEIR.

8.5 REVIEW AND CERTIFICATION OF THE FINAL PEIR

Consistent with CEQA (Public Resource Code Section 21092.5), responses to agency comments are being forwarded to each commenting agency 10 days prior to certification of the Final PEIR. In addition,

responses are also being distributed to all commenters who provided an address. Additionally, the Final PEIR can be downloaded at www.connectsocial.org.