

4. *Environmental Analysis*

This section consists of 16 chapters that evaluate the environmental impacts of the proposed Project. In accordance with Appendix G of the CEQA Guidelines, the potential environmental effects of the Project are analyzed for the following environmental issue areas:

- Aesthetics
- Agriculture and Forestry Resources
- Air Quality
- Biological Resources
- Cultural Resources
- Geology, Soils, and Seismicity
- Greenhouse Gas Emissions
- Hazards and Hazardous Materials
- Hydrology and Water Quality
- Land Use and Planning
- Mineral Resources
- Noise
- Population and Housing
- Public Services and Recreation
- Transportation and Traffic
- Utilities and Service Systems

FORMAT OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS

Each section in Chapter 4, Environmental Analysis, generally follows the same format and consists of the following subsections:

- The **Environmental Setting** subsection contains an overview of the federal, State, and local laws and regulations applicable to each environmental review topic, together with a description of the existing environmental conditions for the environmental factor reviewed.
- The **Standards of Significance** subsection tells how an impact is judged to be significant in this EIR. These standards are based on the CEQA Guidelines, and other regulatory criteria where noted.
- The **Impact Discussion** subsection gives an overview of potential impacts of the proposed Project and explains why impacts were found to be significant or less than significant prior to mitigation. This subsection also includes a discussion of cumulative impacts of the proposed Project.

ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS

- The **Summary of Significant Impacts and Mitigation Measures** subsection lists significant impacts in the Impact Discussion subsection and suggested measures that would mitigate each impact, where such measures are available.

In Chapters 4.1 through 4.16, each numbered impact is considered significant prior to mitigation. Mitigation measures have been suggested that would reduce significant impacts to less-than-significant levels. Following an identified mitigation measure, there is a statement whether the mitigation would reduce the impact to a less-than-significant level, or whether it would remain significant and unavoidable.

CUMULATIVE IMPACT ANALYSIS

Section 15130 of the CEQA Guidelines requires an EIR to discuss cumulative impacts of a project when the project's incremental effect is cumulatively considerable. A cumulative impact consists of an impact created as a result of the combination of the project evaluated in the EIR together with other reasonably foreseeable projects causing related impacts. In the case of an area-wide planning document such as the proposed Plan, cumulative effects occur from development under local area plans, such as general plans, combined with effects of development on lands around the city and region. By definition, development within the Plan Area would be considered part of the cumulative impacts, as would projected growth in other cities and counties in the region.

Where the incremental effect of a project is not "cumulatively considerable," a lead agency need not consider that effect significant, but must briefly describe its basis for concluding that the incremental effect is not cumulatively considerable. The cumulative impacts analyses in Chapters 4.1 to 4.16 are included in the Impact Discussion in each chapter.

GEOGRAPHIC AREA FOR CUMULATIVE ANALYSIS

Individual cumulative impacts may occur over different geographic areas. The cumulative discussions in Chapters 4.1 through 4.16 explain the geographic scope of the area affected by each cumulative effect (e.g. watershed, air basin). The geographic area considered for each cumulative impact depends upon the impact that is being analyzed. For example, in assessing air quality impacts, all development within the air basin contributes to regional emissions of criteria pollutants, and basin-wide projections of emissions are the best tool for determining the cumulative effect. For most resource issues, the cumulative context evaluated in this EIR includes reasonably foreseeable projects in Fresno and Madera counties, and the City of Fresno.

CUMULATIVE PROJECTS CONSIDERED

The CEQA Guidelines provide two approaches to analyzing cumulative impacts. The first is the "list approach," which requires a listing of past, present, and reasonably anticipated future projects producing related or cumulative impacts. The second is the summary approach, wherein the relevant projections contained in an adopted general plan or related planning document that is designed to evaluate regional or area wide conditions are summarized. A reasonable combination of the two approaches may also be used.

ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS

In Chapters 4.1 through 4.16, the cumulative impacts of the proposed Project take into account development and uses projected by the proposed Project, in combination with impacts from projected growth in Fresno and Madera counties and the City of Fresno. In Chapters 4.1 through 4.16, the cumulative impacts discussion is based on the cumulative development described in Chapter 7 of this Draft EIR.

ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS