

# Section 1. Introduction

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This Sustainable Communities Environmental Assessment (SCEA) has been prepared pursuant to Section 21155.2 of the California Public Resources Code.

## 1.1 Background Information on Senate Bill 375 and the SCEA

The State of California adopted Senate Bill 375 (SB 375), also known as “The Sustainable Communities and Climate Protection Act of 2008,” which outlines growth strategies that better integrate regional land use and transportation planning and that help meet the State of California’s greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions reduction mandates. SB 375 requires the State’s 18 metropolitan planning organizations to incorporate a “sustainable communities strategy” (SCS) into the regional transportation plans to achieve their respective region’s greenhouse gas emission reduction targets set by CARB. Correspondingly, SB 375 provides various CEQA streamlining provisions for projects that are consistent with an adopted applicable SCS and meet certain objective criteria; one such CEQA streamlining tool is the SCEA.

The Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) is the metropolitan planning organization for the County of Los Angeles (along with the Counties of Imperial, San Bernardino, Riverside, Orange, and Ventura). On April 7, 2016, SCAG’s Regional Council adopted the 2016-2040 Regional Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategy (2016-2040 RTP/SCS). For the SCAG region, CARB has set GHG emissions reduction targets at eight percent below 2005 per capita emissions levels by 2020, and 13 percent below 2005 per capita emissions levels by 2035. The 2016-2040 RTP/SCS outlines strategies to meet or exceed the targets set by CARB. By Executive Order, approved June 28, 2016, CARB officially determined that the 2016-2040 RTP/SCS would achieve CARB’s 2020 and 2035 GHG emission reduction targets.

SB 375 allows the City of Los Angeles (at times referred to as City), acting as lead agency, to prepare a SCEA as the environmental CEQA Clearance for “Transit Priority Projects” (as described below) that are consistent with SCAG’s 2016-2040 RTP/SCS.

## 1.2 Transit Priority Project Criteria

SB 375 provides CEQA streamlining benefits to qualifying Transit Priority Projects (TPPs). For purposes of projects in the SCAG region, a qualifying TPP is a project that meets the following four criteria (see Public Resources Code §21155 (a) and (b)):

1. Is consistent with the general use designation, density, building intensity, and applicable policies specified for the project area in the SCAG 2016-2040 RTP/SCS;
2. Contains at least 50 percent residential use, based on total building square footage and, if the project contains between 26 percent and 50 percent nonresidential uses, a floor area ratio of not less than 0.75;
3. Provides a minimum net density of at least 20 units per acre; and
4. Is within one-half mile of a Major Transit Stop or High-Quality Transit Corridor included in a regional transportation plan.

## 1.3 SCEA Process and Streamlining Provisions

Qualifying TPPs that have incorporated all feasible mitigation measures and performance standards or criteria set forth in the prior applicable EIR (SCAG's 2016-2040 RTP/SCS Program EIR) and that are determined to not result in significant and unavoidable environmental impacts may be approved with a SCEA. The specific substantive and procedural requirements for the approval of a SCEA include the following:

1. An initial study shall be prepared for a SCEA to identify all significant impacts or potentially significant impacts, except for the following:
  - a. Growth-inducing impacts, and
  - b. Project-specific or cumulative impacts from cars and light trucks on global warming or the regional transportation network.

Note: All relevant and applicable 2016-2040 RTP/SCS Program EIR mitigation measures shall be incorporated into the Project prior to conducting the initial study analysis.

2. The initial study shall identify any cumulative impacts that have been adequately addressed and mitigated in a prior applicable certified EIR. Where the lead agency determines the impact has been adequately addressed and mitigated, the impact shall not be cumulatively considerable.
3. The SCEA shall contain mitigation measures that either avoid or mitigate to a level of insignificance all potentially significant or significant effects of the project required to be identified in the initial study.
4. A draft of the SCEA shall be circulated for a public comment period not less than 30 days, and the lead agency shall consider all comments received prior to acting on the SCEA.

5. The SCEA may be approved by the lead agency after the lead agency's legislative body conducts a public hearing, reviews comments received, and finds the following:
  - a. All potentially significant or significant effects required to be identified in the initial study have been identified and analyzed, and
  - b. With respect to each significant effect on the environment required to be identified in the initial study, either of the following apply:
    - i. Changes or alterations have been required in or incorporated into the project that avoid or mitigate the significant effects to a level of insignificance.
    - ii. Those changes or alterations are within the responsibility and jurisdiction of another public agency and have been, or can and should be, adopted by that other agency.
6. The lead agency's decision to review and approve a TPP with a SCEA shall be reviewed under the substantial evidence standard.

## 1.4 Required Findings

The City of Los Angeles has determined that the proposed Transit Priority Project may be reviewed through a SCEA:

1. The Proposed Project is consistent with the general use designations, density, building intensity, and applicable policies specified for the project area in the Regional Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategy (RTP/SCS) prepared by the Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG);
2. The Proposed Project qualifies as a Transit Priority Project (TPP) pursuant to Public Resources Code Section 21155(b);
3. The Proposed Project is a residential project as defined by Public Resources Code Section 21159.28(d);
4. The Proposed Project, as mitigated, incorporates all relevant and feasible mitigation measures, performance standards, or criteria set forth in the prior environmental reports, including SCAG's RTP/SCS Program Environmental Impact Report;
5. All potentially significant or significant effects required to be identified and analyzed pursuant to the CEQA have been identified and analyzed in an initial study; and

6. The Proposed Project, as mitigated, either avoids or mitigates to a level of insignificance all potentially significant or significant effects of the Proposed Project required to be analyzed pursuant to CEQA.

Therefore, the City of Los Angeles finds that the Proposed Project complies with the requirements of CEQA for using a SCEA as authorized pursuant to Public Resources Code Section 21155.2(b). The attached Section IV, Environmental Impact Analysis, has been prepared by the Parker Environmental Consultants on behalf of the Project Applicant and in conjunction with the City of Los Angeles, as Lead Agency in support of this SCEA.

## 1.5 Organization of the SCEA

This SCEA is organized into nine sections as follows:

Section 1. Introduction: This section provides an overview of the SCEA and CEQA process.

Section 2. Executive Summary/SCEA Environmental Determination: This section provides Proposed Project information, identifies key areas of environmental concern, and includes a determination whether the Proposed Project may have a significant effect on the environment.

Section 3. Project Description: This section provides a detailed description of the Project Site location, the existing environmental setting and the Proposed Project, including details involving the proposed land uses, developed floor area, building height, vehicle parking, bicycle parking, open space areas, landscaping, signage, construction activities, and the associated land use entitlement requests.

Section 4. SCEA Criteria and Transit Priority Project Consistency Analysis: This section identifies the Transit Priority Project Criteria and provides an analysis of the Proposed Project's consistency with the SCAG RTP/SCS.

Section 5. 2016-2040 RTP/SCS Program EIR Mitigation Measures: This section identifies all feasible mitigation measures, performance standards, and criteria from the 2016-2040 RTP/SCS Program EIR.

Section 6. Sustainable Communities Environmental Analysis: Each environmental issue identified in the SCEA Initial Study Checklist contains an assessment and discussion of impacts associated with each subject area. When the evaluation identifies potentially significant effects, mitigation measures are provided to reduce such impacts to a less

than significant level. This section also identifies mitigation measures from the 2016-2040 RTP/SCS EIR that are applicable to the Proposed Project.

Section 7. List of Preparers: This section provides a list of City personnel, other governmental agencies, and consultant team members that participated in the preparation of the SCEA.

Section 8. References, Acronyms and Abbreviations: This section provides a list of reference materials and identifies commonly used acronyms and abbreviations that are used throughout the document.

Appendices: This section includes various reference documents, technical reports, and information used in the SCEA.