

Section 1

Introduction

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

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.¹ 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.²

SB 375 allows the 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.

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 SCAG, 2016-2040 RTP/SCS, Introduction, April 7, 2016. <http://scagtrpscs.net/Pages/FINAL2016RTPSCS.aspx>

² CARB, Executive Order G- 16- 066, June 28, 2016.

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.

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.³

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

³ "Regional transportation network" means all existing and proposed transportation system improvements, including the state transportation system, that were included in the transportation and air quality conformity modeling, including congestion modeling, for the final regional transportation plan adopted by the metropolitan planning organization, but shall not include local streets and roads. Nothing in the foregoing relieves any project from a requirement to comply with any conditions, exactions, or fees for the mitigation of the project's impacts on the structure, safety, or operations of the regional transportation network or local streets and roads.

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 alternations 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.

4 Required Findings

Based on the information contained in this document, the City finds that preparation of a SCEA in accordance with Public Resources Code Section 21155.2(b) is appropriate for the Project for the following reasons:

- The Project is consistent with the general use designations, density, building intensity, and applicable policies specified for the area of the Project Sites in the 2016-2040 RTP/SCS) prepared by SCAG, which is the metropolitan planning organization for the City.
- The State Air Resources Board, pursuant to subparagraph (H) of paragraph (2) of subdivision (b) of Section 65080 of the Government Code, has accepted SCAG's determination that the sustainable communities strategy adopted by SCAG in the 2016-2040 RTP/SCS would, if implemented, achieve the greenhouse gas emission reduction targets.
- The Project qualifies as a transit priority project pursuant to Public Resources Code Section 21155 in that the Project contains more than 50 percent residential use; provides a minimum net density greater than 20 units an acre; and is within one-half mile of a major transit stop or high-quality transit corridor included in a regional transportation plan;
- The Project is a residential or mixed-use project as defined by Public Resources Code Section 21159.28(d);
- The Project incorporates all feasible mitigation measures, performance standards, or criteria set forth in the prior environmental reports and adopted findings made pursuant to Public

Resources Code Section 21081, including the 2016-2040 RTP/SCS Program Environmental Impact Report (Program EIR);

- All potentially significant or significant effects required to be identified and analyzed pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) in an initial study have been identified and analyzed in an initial study; and
- As outlined in detail in Section 2 (Initial Study Checklist) and Attachment B (Environmental Impact Analysis) changes or alterations have been required in or incorporated into the Project that avoid or mitigate the significant effects to a level of less than significant.

5 Organization Of The SCEA

Based on the information presented above, the SCEA for the Project is organized as follows:

Section 1. Introduction: This section provides introductory information about the Project and background information regarding SB 375, lists the TPP criteria, and describes the required content of the SCEA.

Section 2. Initial Study Checklist: This section contains the completed Initial Study Checklist and assesses the significant level under each environmental impact category.

Attachment A. Project Description: This section provides a detailed description of the environmental setting and the Project, including Project characteristics and environmental setting.

Attachment B. Environmental Impact Analysis: Each environmental issue identified in the Initial Study Checklist contains an assessment and discussion of Project-specific and cumulative impacts associated with each subject area. Where the evaluation identifies potentially significant effects, as identified on the Checklist, mitigation measures are provided to reduce such impacts to less-than-significant levels.

Attachment C. SCEA Criteria and TPP Consistency Analysis: This section includes a discussion of the Project's consistency with the TPP criteria listed above and demonstrates that the Project satisfies all necessary criteria for approval of a SCEA as set forth in California Public Resources Code Sections 21155 and 21155.2.

Attachment D. 2016-2040 RTP/SCS Program EIR Mitigation Measures: This section identifies all of the mitigation measures contained in the Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program (MMRP) for SCAG's 2016-2040 RTP/SCS Program EIR and a discussion of the applicability of the mitigation measures to the Project.

Appendices: Includes various documents, technical reports, and information used in preparation of the SCEA.