

CHAPTER 4.5 LAND USE PLANNING

INTRODUCTION

This EIR section describes the existing Placer County land use patterns and evaluates the anticipated impacts of the proposed Placer County RTP. The section proposes appropriate mitigation measures to address any identified significant adverse land use impacts.

SETTING

Regional Context

Placer County extends from the Nevada State line across the Sierra Nevada, through the Sierra Nevada foothills and into the southern portion of the Sacramento Valley. The county encompasses approximately 1,506 square miles or 898,820 acres. It is surrounded by Sacramento and El Dorado counties to the south, Sutter County to the west, Yuba and Nevada counties to the north, and the State of Nevada to the east. The topography of Placer County varies greatly, ranging from flat areas and rolling grassland in the west to foothills in the central area and rugged mountain terrain in the eastern portions of the county. Surrounding areas are characterized by similar topography – eastern portions of Nevada and El Dorado counties are mountainous, while Sacramento and Sutter counties consist primarily of flat to gently rolling terrain.

Placer County has experienced a rapid growth rate, and population in the county is projected to grow from the current 230,060 to a total of 415,335 by the year 2025. Considerable new development has occurred in the foothills in recent years, and this trend is expected to continue, with El Dorado County also expected to nearly double its current population by 2020. The six incorporated cities within Placer County are Auburn, Colfax, Lincoln, Loomis, Rocklin and Roseville. The City of Roseville, in southwestern Placer County, contains the greatest number of residents, 79,556, and Colfax the least at 1,610. (Refer to Chapter 4.6, Table 4-6.1) Auburn, the County seat, is located at the junction of Interstate 80 and State Route 49. These roadways are part of a transportation system which also includes State Routes 20, 28, 65, 89, 174, 193, and 267, the Auburn, Lincoln, and Tahoe-Truckee Airports, and the Union Pacific Railroad.

Existing Land Use Patterns

Residential Land Use

Approximately four percent of Placer County (37,609 acres) had been developed with urban land uses by 1998.¹ Almost half of the people in Placer County live in rural and unincorporated settings. The majority of residential development has occurred in south Placer County, particularly in unincorporated areas and the cities of Roseville, Rocklin and Lincoln.

Residential uses in Placer County range from rural residential areas containing parcels up to 160 acres in rural areas to medium and high density dwelling units in urbanized areas. Most residential development within the county consists of single family dwellings.

Commercial and Industrial Land Use

Existing commercial land uses are principally located in the urbanized portions of the county; although a large concentration of commercial development occurs outside existing urban areas along Interstate 80. The highest concentrations of commercial uses within urbanized areas fall within the cities of Roseville, Rockin, Auburn and Loomis.

Industrial and heavy commercial uses are scattered in various locations outside the various urban boundaries. Concentrations of such uses are located along Interstate 80 near Newcastle, Auburn, Foresthill and Weimar. Industrial park development has occurred in and adjacent to urban communities, particularly along the SR 65 corridor between Roseville and Lincoln.

Nonurban Land Use

Nonurban uses within Placer County include agricultural, resource extractive (timber and mining), and public lands and open space uses. In 1998, roughly 96 percent of the county's land area was in nonurban use.

Mining and Timber

The mining of precious metals, once common within Placer County, has subsided. However, the extraction of sand, gravel, stone (granite), limestone and clay has continued and remains a viable land use within the county, particularly in the western half and near the easternmost edge.

Timber cropland comprises approximately one-third of the county's area, and is located almost entirely east of Foresthill. In 1999, Placer County produced 41,997,000 board feet of timber.²

Public Lands

A large portion of the county, particularly in the eastern half, is under public ownership. The largest amount of public lands within Placer County consists of most of the eastern half of the county, and is under the control of the United States Bureau of Land Management (BLM). Smaller amounts of land in central Placer County are under the jurisdiction of the United States Forest Service and the Bureau of Reclamation.

The State's sovereign interests within Placer County include but are not limited to Lake Tahoe, the Truckee River and the North Fork of the American River. The State Lands Commission has a legal responsibility for, and a strong interest in, protecting the ecological and Public Trust values associated with the State's sovereign lands, including the use of these lands for habitat preservation, open space and recreation. Proposed development located within these waterways is subject to State Lands Commission permitting process.

Much of the land owned by the BLM, Forest Service and Bureau of Reclamation consists of open space areas in central and eastern Placer County.

Agriculture

Please refer to Chapter 4.2, Agricultural Resources, for discussion of the impacts of the RTP on Placer County's agricultural land use.

Placer County General Plan

The existing Placer County General Plan was adopted in 1994. This plan is complemented by 16 area and community plans that provide more detailed land use and policy guidance for specific areas of the county. The traffic model used to predict long-range level of service impacts on county roadways includes growth projections contained within the General Plan.

The area and community plans contain goals and policies for guiding future development within the county. Many of the policies are directed toward future residential, commercial, and industrial development proposals. In addition, most plans call for site-specific traffic analyses as part of development proposals.

IMPACTS AND MITIGATION MEASURES

Methods

Information on existing land patterns in the potentially affected areas of Placer County were identified based on information contained in the Placer County General Plan, including land use maps.

The land use evaluation is based on a comparison of the existing and proposed changes in regional land use patterns in Placer County. The evaluation of the compatibility of the RTP with existing land uses focuses on potential direct loss of housing or businesses, displacement of residents, and change in overall character of an area. The effects of improved traffic flow and decreased congestion due to RTP implementation are assumed to be positive. Furthermore, as this is a program-level document, the analysis does not address the project-specific effects of individual transportation improvements listed in the RTP in detail. These impacts will be addressed in future project-specific environmental analyses for these individual projects.

Standards of Significance

In accordance with the CEQA Guidelines and for the purpose of this analysis, land use impacts are considered significant if one or more of the following conditions would result from implementation of the Placer County RTP:

- A substantial change to the land use patterns in Placer County, including physical disruption or division of an established community;
- Conflict with adopted environmental plans and goals of the Placer County General Plan, Area Plans, or community Plans; or
- Conversion of prime agricultural land to nonagricultural use, or impairment of the agricultural productivity of prime agricultural land.

Impacts and Mitigation Measures

Impact 4.5-1: Implementation of the proposed Placer County RTP could conflict with adopted environmental and planning documents within and affecting Placer County. This is considered to be a potentially significant impact.

Implementation of individual projects included within the RTP could potentially conflict with local plans and policies within the county, including various general plan updates and area and/or specific plan updates currently underway in the county. Implementation of the Placer County RTP could also conflict with various state programs and master plans affecting resource areas such as air quality, transportation, and State Sovereign and Public Trust lands.

Mitigation Measures

Implementation of the following mitigation measure would reduce this impact to a less-than-significant level.

4.5-1 Individual projects shall be reviewed for consistency by local jurisdictions and, as appropriate, transportation agencies, with applicable adopted plans,

programs and policies in place at local and state levels at the time the individual projects are implemented.

Individual projects included within the RTP must comply with any local and state plans and policies prior to development and will consequently need to be evaluated at a project-specific level.

Impact 4.5-2: Implementation of the proposed Placer County RTP could disrupt the natural ecology and community development patterns along various roadways. This is considered to be a significant and unavoidable impact.

Short-term construction activities associated with proposed capital improvements within the RTP could conflict with land uses adjacent to roadway segments planned for improvements, due to dust, noise, and construction traffic. Construction-related impacts would include laborers going to and from work at the site, material and equipment deliveries, and large construction equipment such as graders. In addition, long-term operation of the improved facilities would conflict with existing adjacent land uses. Alteration of roadway configurations would increase the capacity of the roadways, thereby creating the potential for incompatibilities with adjacent uses, particularly residential.

Mitigation Measures

Implementation of the following mitigation measures would reduce this impact, but it remains significant and unavoidable.

- 4.5-2(a) *Upon completion of construction where vegetation removal occurs, roadways should be revegetated with comparable size and species of trees and shrubs to the extent feasible*
- 4.5-2(b) *Whenever feasible, specific roadway alignments shall be designed to avoid existing structures.*
- 4.5-2(c) *Implement safety procedures including warning signs, traffic cones, flaggers, and other traffic regulating devices, as necessary.*
- 4.5-2(d) *Individual projects should be designed to minimize long-term community disruption by maintaining access between residential and community services.*
- 4.5-2(e) *Implement Mitigation Measure 4.7-3.*

ENDNOTES

¹ State of California 1996 –1998 Placer County Land Use Conversion Report.

² California Department of Finance, www.dof.ca.gov/

