

# CHAPTER 6: PROJECT ALTERNATIVES

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## INTRODUCTION

In accordance with Section 15126.6 of CEQA Guidelines (2001), a Draft EIR must describe a range of reasonable alternatives to the proposed project (or to its location) that could feasibly attain the objectives of the project. The comparative merits of these alternatives must be described and evaluated, Section 15126.6(e)(2) of the CEQA Guidelines (2001) requires that the No Project Alternative be evaluated and an environmentally superior alternative be designated. If the alternative with the least environmental impacts is the No Project Alternative, one of the other remaining alternatives is to be designated as the environmentally superior alternative.

### Alternatives Analysis

Three alternatives to the proposed 2022 RTP were considered as a part of the environmental review.

1. The **Funding Assured Projects Alternative** is designed to minimize the need for additional expenditures by constraining the list of constructed projects to those with committed funding. This alternative emphasizes the construction of already funded transportation projects financed through local funding measures currently in place.
2. The **TSM Alternative** is designed to minimize roadway impacts and to emphasize the development and maintenance of alternative transportation projects, including public transit (bus and rail), aviation, bicycles, and other non-motorized transportation.
3. The **No Project Alternative** includes services and facilities which currently exist and the maintenance of those services and facilities. It would not include those funded projects which have not yet been implemented or constructed.

Each of the three alternatives is described below in terms of its relative emphasis in four key areas: Roadways, Rail, Transit, and Alternative Transportation.

### Alternative Evaluation

This section analyzes the impacts of the three alternatives in comparison to those of the proposed project, the 2022 RTP. Table 6-1 summarizes the overall level of significance of the general impacts that would result from the proposed project, the

Funding Assured Projects Alternative, the TSM Alternative, and the No Project Alternative. The TSM Alternative would result in the least adverse environmental impact.

**Table 6.1**

<b>COMPARISON OF PROJECT ALTERNATIVES</b>			
	<b>Funding Assured Projects</b>	<b>TSM</b>	<b>No Project</b>
Aesthetics	●	★	★
Agricultural Resources	■	●	★
Air Quality	■	●	■
Biological and Natural Resources	■	●	★
Land Use Planning	●	★	★
Population/Housing	■	★	★
Transportation/Traffic	■	●	■
★ More Favorable ● Comparable ■ Less Favorable			

**FUNDING ASSURED PROJECTS ALTERNATIVE**

The Funding Assured RTP Projects Alternative is based on the project list developed by PCTPA in August, 2001. This alternative would minimize additional expenditures by emphasizing the construction of funded transportation projects and projects that would be funded in the future by the existing local funding process. This alternative includes emphasis in the following areas:

Roadways – The primary consideration of this alternative is the maintenance, modernization and development of existing roadways. Some new roadways would be built to accommodate the implementation of local general plans. These roads are, in most cases, extensions of existing roadways to improve the connectivity and circulation needed to absorb the expected growth in population and employment.

Rail – Minimal emphasis would be placed on the development and use of rail transportation under this alternative, with the main objective of maintaining existing rail transportation systems. Intercity and commuter rail projects included in the RTP are not included in this alternative.

Transit – Minimal emphasis would be placed on the development and use of public and private transit services under this alternative, with the primary objective of maintaining and further developing existing transit services. This alternative would not expand urbanized services through the use of federal funds.

Alternative Transportation – Because no CMAQ funds would be utilized in this alternative, minimal emphasis would be placed on the development and use of alternative transportation methods such as Trip Reduction Ordinances, bicycling, and pedestrian transportation under this scenario, with a basic goal of maintaining existing programs.

## **Environmental Impacts**

### **Aesthetics**

Implementation of the Funding Assured RTP Projects Alternative would have aesthetic and visual quality impacts similar to those expected for the proposed RTP, but on a smaller scale. Alteration of existing views, increased glare, and increased night lighting would occur in areas directly surrounding the proposed improvements. These impacts would not be as widespread as those anticipated under the proposed project.

### **Agricultural Resources**

Due to the limited scope of the improvements as compared to the proposed RTP, it is unlikely that the alternative would encourage the conversion of prime agricultural land to non-agricultural use, or impair agricultural productivity or prime agricultural land to the degree of the proposed project.

By relieving identified transportation deficiencies and potentially increasing capacity of several roadways within the county, this alternative may contribute to pressure to convert open space to developed uses, thereby encouraging incremental increases in the loss of open space views in these areas. These impacts on open space views would be on a smaller scale than those associated with implementation of the proposed RTP.

### **Air Quality**

Impacts related to the regional achievement of emission reduction requirements would be similar to those anticipated under the proposed RTP. Construction-related impacts from roadway improvements under this alternative would be significantly less than anticipated for the proposed RTP due to the fewer number of improvements planned.

### **Biological and Natural Resources**

Under the Funding Assured Projects Alternative, impacts to biological and natural resources could occur as a result of encroachment into habitat areas, however the impacts would be on a smaller scale than those associated with implementation of the proposed RTP.

## **Land Use Planning**

Implementation of the Funding Assured RTP Projects Alternative would cause similar land use impacts to those associated with the proposed project, although to lesser degree. As with the proposed RTP, individual projects within the Funding Assured Alternative could conflict with individual goals and policies of local adopted plans. However, this alternative includes fewer transportation improvements than the proposed project; consequently, potential conflicts would be likely to be fewer and less severe overall.

## **Population/Housing**

The widening of roadways under this alternative and associated improved access to various parts of the county are intended to accommodate increased population growth and affect existing housing supplies, but to a lesser degree than the proposed RTP. Population distribution changes within the county would likely occur on a smaller scale than those anticipated for the proposed project.

## **Transportation/Traffic**

Implementation of the Funding Assured Alternative would improve transportation and circulation in the areas targeted by the funded improvement projects, but the improvement would be significantly less than that anticipated under the proposed RTP. Due to the limited nature of the improvements on a countywide scale, overall transportation and circulation conditions within Placer County could worsen under this alternative rather than improve as predicted under the proposed project.

In summary, although implementation of the Funding Assured alternative could relieve some of the existing and projected demand for transportation services within portions of the county, it would not necessarily resolve LOS deficiencies on several roadway segments by the year 2022. Indeed, although implementation of funding assured projects would improve the level of service in some areas, several roadways would probably operate at LOS D or lower even after the funded improvements, similar to conditions anticipated under the proposed RTP.

## **TSM ALTERNATIVE**

The Transportation Systems Management (TSM) Alternative is designed to minimize roadway impacts and to emphasize the development and maintenance of alternative transportation projects. Areas of emphasis under this alternative include:

Roadways – Minimal emphasis would be placed on roadway development under this alternative, with a primary focus on maintenance and development of the existing and funded roadway systems within Placer County.

Rail – Strong emphasis would be placed on the development and use of rail transportation under this alternative, particularly on the maintenance and development of the new intercity rail transportation system and commuter rail services. Under this alternative, these services would be closely integrated with land use in Placer County.

Transit – Strong emphasis would be placed on the development and use of public and private transit services under this alternative, especially on the existing Short Range Transit Plans, extension of services, and the integration of transit systems with land uses.

Alternative Transportation – Strong emphasis would be placed on alternative transportation methods, particularly on stringent Transportation Systems Management and Trip Reduction Ordinance programs and the integration of transportation systems with land uses within Placer County.

Under this alternative, the PCTPA would shift resources now allocated to roadway projects to a variety of alternative transportation projects. The objective of this alternative would be to encourage the greater use of alternative transportation modes to meet expected increases in travel demand.

## **Environmental Impacts**

### **Aesthetics**

Implementation of the TSM Alternative would lessen the severity of the aesthetic and visual quality impacts expected for the proposed RTP. Alteration of existing views, increased glare, and increased night lighting could occur in areas directly surrounding any proposed roadway or rail improvements. Due to the emphasis on alternative transportation and the related lack of growth-induced development in undeveloped areas, these impacts would not be as widespread as those anticipated under the proposed project.

### **Agricultural Resources**

The potential increase in roadway capacity due to increased usage of transit and alternative modes would be minimal under this alternative. The TSM Alternative would not contribute to pressure to convert some existing open space to developed uses.

### **Air Quality**

Impacts related to regional achievement of emission reduction requirements could be substantially less than those anticipated under the proposed project, as this alternative emphasizes the use of transit and alternative modes of transportation over automobile transportation. Although roadway improvements would occur,

short-term construction-related impacts due to emissions of PM 10, ROC and NOx would be significantly less for this alternative than under the proposed RTP due to the smaller number of improvements anticipated. The potential for short-term, construction-related emissions of asbestos would also be proportionately lower than those expected under the proposed RTP.

### **Biological and Natural Resources**

Impacts to biological and natural resources under the TSM Alternative would be fewer as this alternative focuses on use and improvements to existing infrastructure and systems. However, where physical improvements to existing corridors or systems are required, encroachment into sensitive habitat areas could occur.

### **Land Use Planning**

Implementation of the TSM Alternative would cause less severe land use impacts than the proposed RTP. As with the proposed RTP, individual improvement projects within the TSM Alternative could conflict with individual goals and policies of locally adopted plans. This alternative includes fewer transportation improvements requiring construction of new facilities than the proposed project; consequently, fewer conflicts would be likely to arise. On the other hand, this alternative would not provide the transportation infrastructure needed to properly implement local land use plans. With the growth expected for the county, this alternative would lead to greater congestion and poor access to the interregional transportation system.

Alternative transportation improvements are generally most effective in connection with existing roadways and service to urbanized populated areas, thereby focusing growth in existing communities. Due to the limited nature of roadway improvements under the TSM Alternative, and the emphasis on alternative transportation modes, this alternative would not encourage the conversion of prime agricultural land to the degree that may occur the proposed RTP.

### **Population/Housing**

The emphasis on transit and alternative transportation under this alternative would have a lesser effect on population growth and existing housing supplies within Placer County than the proposed RTP. Some population distribution changes could result from improved transportation within the county, but would be unlikely to occur at the scale expected for the proposed project. Existing market factors would probably not support the higher densities needed to successfully implement this strategy. The overall numbers of residents and dwelling units assumed in Placer County under the RTP are not projected to change for this alternative.

## **Transportation/Traffic**

Due to the emphasis on transit and alternative transportation improvements under the TSM Alternative, impacts related to transportation and circulation would be significantly less than those anticipated under the proposed RTP, and thus could be beneficial. Implementation of this alternative would slightly relieve the existing and projected demand for transportation services within the county and encourage greater use of alternative modes. However, this increased use of alternative forms of transportation alone is not expected to improve LOS deficiencies to an acceptable degree.

## **NO PROJECT ALTERNATIVE**

The No Project Alternative includes only existing transportation services and facilities in operation as of August 2001. Facilities for which funding has been secured but which have not yet been developed would not be included in this alternative. Under this alternative, the proposed RTP would not be adopted or implemented. Minimal emphasis would be placed in key areas, as follows:

Roadways – Limited emphasis would be placed on roadway development under this alternative, with the exception of maintenance of existing roadway systems.

Rail – Minimal emphasis would be placed on rail transportation under this alternative, other than maintenance of existing rail transportation systems.

Transit – Minimal emphasis would be placed on public and private transit services under this alternative, with the main focus for transit funding on the maintenance of existing transit services.

Alternative Transportation – Little emphasis would be placed on alternative transportation methods other than the maintenance of existing programs under this alternative.

## **Environmental Impacts**

Under the No Project Alternative, any adverse environmental impacts related directly to the proposed RTP would be avoided: Aesthetics, Agricultural Resources, Biological and Natural Resources, Land Use Planning, Population/Housing, and Transportation/Traffic. However, the beneficial transportation/traffic impacts anticipated under the proposed RTP due to improved transportation opportunities would not occur under the No Project Alternative. Existing LOS deficiencies would persist, and would be expected to worsen, as would air quality impacts related to existing conditions.

## **ENVIRONMENTALLY SUPERIOR ALTERNATIVE**

The CEQA Guidelines [Section 15126.6 (e)(2)] (2001) require EIRs to identify the environmentally superior alternative of the alternatives analyzed. In addition, if the EIR finds that the No Project Alternative is the environmentally superior alternative, it must identify another of the alternatives as the environmentally superior alternative. The proposed project cannot be chosen as the environmentally superior alternative.

While the No Project Alternative would avoid the impacts associated with construction and operation of the projects proposed in the RTP, this EIR demonstrates that the impacts on air quality and transportation/traffic would be significantly worse than what would be anticipated under the proposed RTP.

The Funding Assured Projects Alternative would not completely avoid any of the impacts of the proposed project, and would have significantly greater impacts on air quality and transportation/traffic.

Based on an analysis of the environmental impacts, it is determined that the Transportation Systems Management Alternative is the environmentally superior alternative. This alternative would avoid many of the project-specific impacts of the proposed RTP. It would, however, have air quality and transportation/traffic impacts that are comparable to the proposed RTP.

It should be noted that identification of the environmentally superior alternative is a requirement of CEQA for the benefit of decision-makers and the public. This determination is another “disclosure” feature of CEQA. It does not preclude or in any way limit the PCTPA from taking action on the proposed project.