6.0 OTHER IMPACT CONSIDERATIONS

6.1 GROWTH

Both the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) require consideration of impacts associated with growth. A general discussion of NEPA and CEQA requirements is provided in Chapter 1 of this Tier 1 Environmental Impact Statement/Environmental Impact Report (EIS/EIR). In addition, other types of legislation pertain to growth. Relevant laws and guidelines are described below.

6.1.1 REGULATORY FRAMEWORK

The CEQA requires that environmental documents: "Discuss the ways in which the proposed project could foster economic or population growth, or the construction of additional housing, either directly or indirectly, in the surrounding environment. Included in this are projects that would remove obstacles to population growth. Increases in the population may further tax existing community service facilities so consideration must be given to this impact. Also discuss the characteristic of some projects that may encourage and facilitate other activities that could significantly affect the environment, either individually or cumulatively. It must not be assumed that growth in any area is necessarily beneficial, detrimental, or of little significance to the environment" (CEQA Section 15126.2(d)). In addition, NEPA requires consideration of the potential indirect project impacts, including those that may occur farther away or later in time, but are still reasonably foreseeable (NEPA Section 1508.8(b)).

The California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) Environmental Handbook, Volume 4, Community Impact Assessment (June 1997) is the primary guidance document that was used in the preparation of this growth inducement analysis. It defines growth inducement as the relationship between a proposed project and growth within the transportation project area (Caltrans, 1997). Just as this analysis was being completed, the Mare Island Accord interagency working group (representing the Federal Highway Administration [FHWA], the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency [U.S. EPA], and Caltrans) released new guidance for assessment of growth-related impacts analyses (Mare Island Accord, 2006). The approach described in the new guidance is more elaborate than, but similar and complementary to, the earlier guidance. Specifically, it recommends a six-step approach for developing a growth-related impact analysis: (1) Review previous project information and decide on the approach/level of effort needed for the analysis; (2) Identify the potential for growth for each alternative; (3) Assess the growth-related effects of each alternative to resources of concern; (4) Consider additional opportunities to avoid and minimize growth-related impacts; (5) Compare the results of the analysis for all alternatives; and (6) Document the process and findings of the analysis. While this section is not structured to reflect these six steps in order, they were substantially completed during the course of this analysis. A summary of the growth-inducement findings was prepared and provided to the members of the environmental consulting team so that they could determine the implications of these findings for the resources of concern in the project area, and consider additional opportunities to avoid or minimize impacts. Results of the analyses have been compared and documented in the appropriate resource discussions contained in this Tier 1 EIS/EIR.

Specific analytical approaches identified in the new guidance include contacting local planning agencies and business development councils for their input, and consulting with experts (such as planners, developers and agency staff). These approaches were used extensively in the preparation of the growth inducement analysis. The growth analysis is discussed in greater detail in the Community Impact Assessment (CIA) for this Tier 1 EIS/EIR (Mara Feeney & Associates and North Fork Associates, 2007).

6.1.2 METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

Recent literature on the role of transportation infrastructure in land use changes demonstrates that growth and development patterns are shaped by a wide range of social, economic, political, and environmental influences. (A summary of pertinent literature is contained in Appendix B of the Community Impact Assessment.) Many factors interact to encourage or discourage growth at any particular location. These factors are complex and interrelated, and there is no standard or widely accepted methodology for evaluating or quantifying how any single factor, such as construction of a new transportation facility, contributes to local or regional growth.

Caltrans' guidance on growth inducement analysis acknowledges the difficulty of accurately determining the relationship between transportation and land use, or isolating the influence that transportation improvements have on growth and development, especially because in many instances transportation improvements are planned in cooperation with local and regional governments in response to anticipated, planned, and desired growth. The guidance describes a variety of quantitative and qualitative approaches that have been used on past transportation projects to address growth inducement. The guidance document includes a special appendix on growth-inducement methodologies that describes four primary analytical techniques:

- the ***forecast methodology***, which describes the transportation planning and traffic engineering process that was used to determine the size and type of transportation facility proposed;
- ***factor analysis***, which identifies and evaluates the local factors that encourage or constrain growth and development in the study area;
- the ***No Action Alternative***, which focuses on a comparison of the projected growth that would occur with and without the proposed project; and
- use of a ***growth inducement checklist***, which asks a series of questions about the proposed project in relation to population and employment growth and trends in the study area.

With the recent rapid growth that has taken place northeast of the City of Sacramento, growth inducement has been identified by resource agencies and environmental groups as a concern with regard to any new proposed development in the study area and the surrounding vicinity. Because of the importance and relatively high sensitivity of the growth inducement issue for Placer Parkway, it was determined that the growth inducement analysis should be conducted using a number of different methods, employing both quantitative and qualitative analytical tools, to achieve a thorough growth inducement analysis. All four methodological approaches identified above—forecast method, factor analysis, the No-Build Alternative, and the Caltrans Growth Inducement Checklist—were employed for the growth analysis. In addition, input was solicited from planners, realtors, builders, and developers familiar with the study area, so that their expertise and knowledge of the area could be used to better understand growth and development trends in the region.

The full analysis based on these methodologies is contained in the CIA for this Tier 1 EIS/EIR (Mara Feeney & Associates and North Fork Associates, 2007). For the purposes of the Tier 1 EIS/EIR, a summary description of these methods and findings is presented below.

6.1.3 IMPACT ANALYSIS

6.1.3.1 Forecast Method

The forecast method summarizes the transportation planning process that was used to determine the size of the proposed facility, in order to illustrate the relationship between the project's capacity and the amount of growth expected to occur in the area by 2040, with the objective of distinguishing between growth inducement and the forecasting of traffic demand and transportation needs based on local and regional growth policies, determined in conjunction with responsible local government agencies and with considerable public involvement.

Placer Parkway was first shown as a "plan line" concept in the Placer County General Plan adopted in 1994. The concept for this new regional roadway originated from a perceived need to connect planned development in the vicinities of SR 70/99 and SR 65. The rapidly expanding high technology and service businesses located along the SR 65 corridor and in the Sunset Industrial Area needed better access to the air freight services at the Sacramento International Airport.

The Conceptual Plan for Placer Parkway, completed in 2000, articulated a number of reasons why a new corridor connecting SR 65 to SR 70/99 should be preserved. These included:

- projections of very strong growth (by both the Sacramento Area Council of Governments [SACOG] and the California Department of Finance) for the southern Sutter County, western Placer County/northern Sacramento County subregions through 2040;
- associated substantial increase in travel demand on the inter-regional roadway system, resulting in deterioration of travel speeds and travel times on regional and local roadways;
- projections of strong job growth in western Placer County such that total employment in this area would exceed total employment in downtown Sacramento by 2022; and
- growth of high-technology industries in the SR 65 corridor, requiring efficient access to the Sacramento airport to move manufactured goods reliably and rapidly (DKS Associates, 2001).

The Conceptual Plan indicated that Riego/Baseline Road, with some improvements, could accommodate a portion of the expected growth in travel demand that would result from population and employment growth in the region, but would be overwhelmed without construction of an alternative east-west travel corridor capable of carrying more traffic at consistently high speeds.

The question of growth inducement has been considered throughout the planning process for Placer Parkway, and concerns related to this issue were addressed through adopted policies aimed at: (1) not allowing access to the roadway in areas designated for agricultural use; (2) creating a 500- to 1,000-foot no-development buffer zone along the Parkway; and (3) using control signage along the corridor. Placer Parkway project planning to date has been primarily a cooperative and collaborative process (see Appendix A) aimed at meeting projected travel demand (see Section 4.8, Traffic and Transportation) associated with actual and anticipated population and employment growth in the region, rather than an effort aimed at stimulating or facilitating unplanned growth.

6.1.3.2 Factor Analysis

Within the study area, as in any area, a wide variety of factors influence the direction and pace of development. These include the availability and relative cost of land, local government plans and policies, public attitudes toward growth and development, terrain and existing land use, cost and availability of labor, commute times, accessibility, infrastructure availability (water, sewer, roads), as well as any potential constraints associated with the proposed facility. The paragraphs below provide a brief discussion of these factors as they apply to the project area. (Refer to the Community Impact Assessment for more detailed discussion.)

Cost of Land

An important factor in the rapid rate of growth and development experienced in the Roseville-Rocklin area during the 1990s was the large discrepancy between local land costs and those in the San Francisco Bay Area, as well as in the Sacramento region and the state. This gap in land and housing costs has narrowed considerably over the past decade, as home prices and commercial leasing rates have risen in the Roseville area, similar to the rest of California. Nonetheless, land costs in the study area remain lower than in the San Francisco Bay Area (and in the foothill areas of Placer County) and competitive with those in the greater Sacramento region.

Local Plans and Policies

Local government jurisdictions generally have adopted plans and policies that support orderly growth. In the Western Segment, local plans and policies have supported orderly industrial development in south Sutter County in the past, and now a Specific Plan for mixed-use development is being prepared for the Sutter Pointe Specific Plan area, as mandated by voters. City and county plans and policies in the Eastern Segment also attempt to accommodate anticipated growth in an orderly fashion, so these can also be seen as supportive of development. Local jurisdictions are now in the process of amending General Plans and adopting Specific Plans for major new proposed development projects, including Placer Vineyards, Placer Ranch, Creekview, Sierra Vista, Regional University, Curry Creek, and the Lincoln Sphere of Influence expansion. By contrast, local plans and policies are restrictive in the Central Segment, where land is designated and zoned predominantly for agricultural use with an 80-acre minimum parcel size.

Public Attitudes

Articulated attitudes toward growth and development in the study area vary. Some civic or environmental organizations and individuals have expressed concern about the rapid rate of population growth in the region (leading to local efforts to support farmland preservation and habitat conservation), but there are also strong indications of general support for accommodating the growth that has occurred and is projected to continue. In Sutter County, public attitudes toward growth are reflected in the recent passage of Measure M, through which the voters directed county officials to permit mixed-use development in the area of south Sutter County that had been designated for industrial and commercial development. In Placer County, the County Board of Supervisors has directed staff to proceed with consideration of several major new proposals for conversion of agricultural areas to urban mixed-use development that would require General Plan amendments. There appears to be general public support for these proposed developments, despite concern for potential impacts on sensitive habitats and farmland.

Furthermore, in response to the recent submission of multiple development proposals for projects in southwestern Placer County, Placer County and the Cities of Roseville, Rocklin, and Lincoln have collaborated to develop a “likely” future development scenario (the Super-Cumulative scenario described in Section 3.4.1) for purposes of evaluating cumulative impacts associated with these proposals. This

scenario assumes full buildout of all residential land in Placer County west of Sierra College Boulevard by 2025, including current general plan areas, as well as major proposed developments, including Placer Vineyards, the Regional University, and Placer Ranch in the unincorporated county area; Creekview and Sierra Vista Specific Plans in Roseville's MOU Remainder Area; the City of Lincoln's Sphere of Influence expansion areas; and the Curry Creek Community Plan area. Placer Parkway is recognized as a component of this future cumulative development scenario. In addition, there appears to be general public support for these proposed developments. As an example, Placer County voters passed Measure M in November 2005, supporting the development of a university in the region (Gold Country Media, 2006).

Terrain and Land Use

The terrain throughout the study area is relatively flat (i.e., no steep slopes) and conducive to development, except in the vicinity of sensitive habitats such as vernal pool complexes and creeks, as well as in the Natomas basin zone, where the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) flood insurance requirements or flood ratings may constrain development until flood protection is enhanced. In the Western Segment, new residential and commercial development would conflict with the existing agricultural land uses, but planning is underway to transform this area into a mixed use, master planned community. In the Central Segment, new residential and commercial development would conflict with the existing agricultural uses. In the Eastern Segment, existing land uses are compatible with new growth in the Sunset Industrial Area, but not in the agricultural areas in the western portion of this segment.

Cost and Labor Pool

In general, the labor force in the study region is competitive in terms of educational attainment or training and cost. Very strong employment growth has occurred in the Sacramento region and in the Roseville-Rocklin-Lincoln area in recent years, and this job growth is expected to continue. Roseville now accounts for approximately half of all jobs in Placer County and has become a net importer of workers, i.e., there are many more jobs than employed residents in the city. Many of these new jobs pay relatively well, attracting skilled workers. Furthermore, the proposals for two new university campuses in western Placer County, if approved, will help ensure a skilled labor force in the future. In the Central and Western segments at present, population density is low, the resident population is predominantly engaged in agricultural activities, and unemployment rates are higher. Nonetheless, abundant skilled labor is available in adjacent areas of the greater Sacramento region to support employment growth. In addition, much of the growth contemplated for the Sutter Pointe Specific Plan area is mixed-use development that would attract new residents to fill new jobs to be created in that area.

Infrastructure

The existing roadway network in the study area was not planned to accommodate the amount of growth that has occurred and is projected to occur in the region in the future. As a result, traffic congestion has become an increasing problem on some local roadways. Typically, local roadway construction is required as a condition of development approval in the study area, but the construction of roadways within and adjacent to a particular development does not necessarily alleviate deteriorating regional traffic conditions. While projects are being implemented to address problem areas along the regional SR 65 and I-80 corridors, commuters are using alternative routes on roads such as Riego/Baseline Road to avoid bottlenecks on the state and interstate freeway system. Local government entities typically condition new specific plans to require that new roadways be constructed to accommodate increased traffic volumes. Similarly, local government entities typically require new major developments to pay development impact fees or directly provide certain utilities and services as a condition of development approval. Long-range planning efforts to provide water, sewer, and energy have been relatively successful.

Infrastructure in the Eastern Segment is more developed to accommodate growth, while infrastructure in the Western and Central segments of the study area is less developed at present. Population density in these areas is low, homes and businesses rely on water services from private wells and septic systems, and there are few schools or parks. As major development projects are planned and approved for these areas in the future, developers will undoubtedly be required to provide basic services and amenities, as is the case in developing areas of the surrounding region.

While local infrastructure needs may be met through planning and mitigation requirements for specific master planned developments, regional needs also need to be addressed. To some extent, local government entities may be basing development approvals on assumptions that regional infrastructure needs will be met—for example, through funding and implementation of projects identified in the Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) and Regional Transportation Plan (including Placer Parkway). While the local economy is relatively strong, there are many competing demands for funding and infrastructure development, making the implementation of desired regional transportation and other infrastructure improvements uncertain.

Commute Time

Recent rapid development northeast of Sacramento has resulted in increased traffic congestion and slower travel times throughout the area. Many drivers are now taking "shortcuts" on roadways that were not designed to carry regional through traffic, in order to avoid the bottlenecks experienced on highways and major arterials. While there have been major recent improvements to the local and regional roadway network, many more improvements are needed to accommodate the projected increase in travel demand associated with anticipated population and employment growth. By providing an alternative regional connector linking the Roseville-Lincoln area to SR 70/99 and the Sacramento airport and relieving traffic congestion on local roadways, Placer Parkway would improve commute conditions and reduce the number of peak hours spent in traffic congestion. The Parkway could shorten commute times from SR 65 to downtown Sacramento or the Sacramento Airport vicinity by approximately 15 minutes in peak commute hours, or about 12 minutes during off-peak hours (HDR/HLB Decision Economics, 2006; DKS Associates, 2007). This would shorten trip durations by approximately one-third.

Access

The Parkway would improve access to adjacent land in the Western and Eastern segments, where new high-speed interchanges are proposed to connect the Parkway with existing SR 65 at the eastern terminus and SR 70/99 at the western terminus. In addition, new interchanges would be constructed to provide access to adjacent areas in these two segments. By contrast, no interchanges are proposed for the Central Segment, so the new roadway would not affect access to adjacent lands in this segment, unless an interchange with Watt Avenue were to be constructed by others at some future time.

Constraints

Since it is likely that construction of Placer Parkway would happen incrementally, depending upon funding availability and willingness of adjacent property developers to provide land and/or finance roadway construction (see Section 2.2.1), it is possible that portions of the Parkway may not be constructed in the early years of operation, and that the capacity of six-lane portions built to accommodate traffic in rapidly-growing adjacent areas would be constrained by the capacity limitations of four-lane sections constructed in areas that are not experiencing such rapid development. Once the ultimate six-lane facility is completed, the lack of interchanges in the Central Segment would not limit roadway capacity, but could limit its potential use by people living or working in and around that segment.

Other Factors and Uncertainties

Numerous factors are at work influencing growth and development in the study area, in addition to those reviewed according to Caltrans guidance above. These include the continuing net in-migration to California, the proximity of the study area to Sacramento and the Roseville-Rocklin-Lincoln real estate market and job centers, the strength of the state and regional economy, the relatively flat topography of the study area, a temperate climate, ease of land assembly (due to the presence of large parcels of land, versus smaller parcels with many more individual owners involved), open space and vistas, and easy access to Sierra foothill and mountain recreational opportunities. These factors, working together, have created an atmosphere of relatively intense development pressure, especially northeast of Sacramento and throughout the study area.

There are some factors working to discourage growth and development in the study area, including the presence of Williamson Act contracts on agricultural parcels, movements to define habitat conservation areas and agricultural preserves, increasing difficulty in obtaining project entitlements, rising land costs, rising development mitigation fees, rising interest rates, challenges in supplying water and wastewater treatment services, increasing traffic congestion on the local roadway network, and growing FEMA concern about flood risks in the Natomas Basin, which potentially could lead to a building moratorium in that area until flood hazard issues are addressed. Hearings are contemplated for the Placer County Conservation Program in the future, and could result in adoption of a Habitat Conservation Plan that would prohibit development in portions of the study area. Such factors are important considerations for any new proposed development, but to date these obstacles have been overcome for new development projects around the area and have not reduced the relatively intense development pressures that are being experienced in the project vicinity.

In summary, the factors stimulating (rather than constraining) development in the study area are predominately positive (i.e., they encourage rather than discourage development) at present, without the Parkway. The factors favoring or stimulating development in the Eastern Segment are positive under existing conditions, and the Parkway (by improving access and reducing commute times) would add to these positive factors. Factors at work in the Western Segment are somewhat more mixed, because of the lack of developed infrastructure, potential conflicts with existing uses and flood hazards, but still predominately positive. The Parkway would improve access and commute times in both the Western and Eastern segments. In the Central Segment, there are more development constraints, including existing zoning, the prevalence of agricultural activity, concerns about farmland and habitat conservation and lack of developed infrastructure, resulting in less overwhelming growth pressure. Nonetheless, the availability and relative cost of undeveloped land in proximity to major developing areas makes this area subject to moderate development pressures.

6.1.3.3 The No-Build Alternative

The purpose of the No-Build Alternative analysis is to attempt to compare the growth patterns that would occur in the study area with and without the Parkway. The MEPLAN model described below was selected as a tool to be used for this analysis, as well as to compare the effects of a northerly vs. southerly Parkway alignment on regional growth and development patterns. The decision to supplement the growth inducement analysis with MEPLAN model runs was made in order to add a more quantitative layer to what would otherwise remain a relatively qualitative growth inducement analysis.

MEPLAN (DKS Associates, 2007b) is an integrated land use transportation model that forecasts the influence of transportation conditions on local land use development and the impacts of local land use development on transportation conditions. The model was developed by the University of Calgary and UC Davis and has been used for several recent planning and visioning exercises in the Sacramento region,

including SACOG's Blueprint project (SACOG, 2004) and the Mineta Foundation Report on transit-oriented transportation and land use scenarios (Johnston et al., 2004). Use of the MEPLAN model was discussed with SACOG staff, members of the Project Development Team and federal resource agency representatives (U.S. EPA and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, who encouraged the use of this model to support the Placer Parkway growth inducement analysis. The general consensus was that the MEPLAN model runs could help clarify differences in the potential distribution of growth in the study area with and without the project, as well as to differentiate the potential for growth inducement among various project alternatives, including options with and without a future Watt Avenue interchange. Documentation of the MEPLAN model runs and results is provided in a separate technical report (DKS Associates, 2007a). Details of the effect of the addition of a Watt Avenue interchange on the MEPLAN findings are provided in Section 6.1.4.

The MEPLAN model predicted 2040 development levels in the study area and the surrounding region based on five scenarios:

- No Build-Alternative
- Alternative 1
- Alternative 1 with Watt Avenue interchange
- Alternative 5
- Alternative 5 with Watt Avenue interchange

For each scenario, the model predicted 2040 changes in households and employment in each of the 96 subareas defined for the study area and the surrounding region. The MEPLAN model showed that there would be slight differences in the distribution of households and jobs in the region under each scenario, but that, overall, these differences would not be substantial. Compared to the No-Build Alternative, the MEPLAN model estimates that about 1,000 to 1,200 additional households would develop by 2040 in the project vicinity under the build alternatives, and that the amount of residential development in the surrounding region (e.g., rural portions of Yuba, Sutter and Yolo counties) would decrease by about the same amount. The 1,000 to 1,200 additional households represent an increase of about 0.4 percent in the total number of households in the local project vicinity by 2040, compared with the No Build Alternative.

The MEPLAN model estimates that the increase in households under Alternative 1 would be about the same as under Alternative 5. The location of the increase in households is somewhat influenced by the corridor alignment. A small number of additional households would be expected to be located further north under Alternative 5 compared to Alternative 1.

Compared to the No-Build Alternative, the MEPLAN model estimates that about 1,800 to 2,100 additional jobs would exist by 2040 in the local project vicinity with the build alternatives. (The amount of jobs in the remainder of the region would decrease by about the same amount). The 1,800 to 2,100 additional jobs represent an increase of about 0.6 percent to 0.7 percent in the total number of jobs in the local project vicinity by 2040. The MEPLAN model estimates that Alternative 1 would result in approximately 100 more jobs in the local project vicinity as compared to Alternative 5.

6.1.3.4 Expert Opinions

Telephone interviews were conducted in March and April 2006 with twenty-five persons who are actively involved in planning and development issues in and around the study area, or who have been engaged in long-term agricultural activities in the area, to solicit their insights and informed opinions about the factors influencing growth and development in the area.

Developer Responses

Nine developers representing major players in the project study region (Richland Communities, KT Communities, Placer Ranch, Brookfield Land Company, Blue Oaks Property Owners, Stanford Ranch, KMS Development, Northern Territories, and Lennar Communities) were asked the direct question: "Did the proposal for a Placer Parkway influence your company's decision to plan or propose real estate development in the vicinity?" Generally it appeared that Placer Parkway had not been a major factor in development decisions, with most regional growth considered inevitable. Many developers saw the Parkway as beneficial for the congestion and regional economic growth. Additional details of findings from these interviews are included in the Community Impact Assessment (Mara Feeney & Associates and North Fork Associates, 2007).

Planner Responses

Eight senior-level planners representing eight jurisdictions or agencies (SACOG, Sutter County, Placer County, Sacramento County, City of Roseville, City of Rocklin, City of Lincoln, and the City of Sacramento) were asked the direct question: "To what extent does the Placer Parkway proposal influence land use planning in your jurisdiction?" Most planners considered that the Parkway had no influence or very little influence on local land use planning in their jurisdiction, and that, while the Parkway would influence traffic in the region, they did not consider it would influence land use planning or development patterns, which they considered to be more market-driven. Additional details of findings from these interviews are included in the Community Impact Assessment.

Factor Ranking Exercise Results

Developers and planners were asked to rank the relative importance of 18 factors that can potentially influence development decisions. The developers and planners had slightly differing opinions as to which factors were the most important. Developers ranked Environmental Mitigation Requirements the highest, followed by Local Attitudes Toward Development and Water Availability. Planners ranked Local Roadway Traffic Congestion the highest, followed by Proximity to Existing Development and SACOG Blueprint.

There was reasonable consistency among interviewees regarding which development factors were the least important: Ease of Land Assembly, Existing Zoning, Williamson Act Contracts, Flat Terrain, and Proximity to Parks and Open Space. While the planners had also ranked Development Impact Fees as not very important, the developers interviewed gave this factor a higher average score.

What the Farmers Had to Say

The persons interviewed included four rice farmers and one cattle rancher. Of the five, one had recently sold his land holdings in the area, two had sold development options on some or all of their land, and two had received expressions of interest in their property but had not sold property or development options yet. Two owned land in southern Sutter County and three owned land in southwestern Placer County.

All five of the farmers interviewed expressed deep skepticism about the future of agriculture in the study area. All commented on the intense development pressures being felt in the area, the substantial increase in conflicts between agricultural and urban uses in recent years, and the increasing costs of agricultural production relative to other areas of the state. They viewed developers in the area as extremely influential, and themselves as having neither the money nor the time to stop development. All saw it as a matter of time before agricultural activity would cease in the area, and they were all looking for the right opportunity to transition out of the area and try to exchange their property for agricultural land elsewhere.

Other Comments

Many of those interviewed echoed the belief that continued rapid growth and development in the study area was inevitable. They pointed out that most of the land from Roseville to Sutter County is owned or controlled by developers, who have lots of political savvy and apply lots of pressure. With strong population growth expected to continue in California, and with the Sacramento region continuing to capture much of that growth, it appears that the market conditions will remain favorable, even though there has been some softening in new home prices very recently. The farmers who were interviewed all felt that agriculture could not be sustained in the study area much longer. If they had not already sold or optioned their land, they were planning to do so and were looking for the right opportunity to move to another area, where agricultural activity might be more viable and less in conflict with ongoing and planned urban development.

6.1.3.5 Growth Inducement Checklist

This section lists the eight questions contained in the Growth Inducement Checklist developed for Caltrans and included in Appendix D of the Environmental Handbook Volume 4, Community Impact Assessment (Caltrans, 1997). The questions are answered in accordance with the Caltrans guidance, with a Yes response indicating some potential for a growth inducing impact, but without regard to the level of significance of that impact.

1. a) Will the project attract more residential development or new population into the community or planning area? b) If yes, would it be higher than is projected in the local general plan?

a – *No*. The project would not directly attract more population into the area, e.g., through the construction of new homes or businesses, and it is anticipated that all housing units currently allowed under adopted general plans will be built by 2020, when the Parkway is assumed to open. The cumulative development scenario for 2040 anticipates construction of many additional housing units as proposed by major projects in south Sutter and southwestern Placer County, but these units are being planned in the absence of any approvals or funding for Placer Parkway, so they cannot be attributed to the project. While the residential development that is anticipated under the 2040 cumulative development scenario is higher than what is currently anticipated under local adopted General Plans, local jurisdictions in Placer County are in the process of amending General Plans and adopting Specific Plans for proposed major projects, including Placer Vineyards, Placer Ranch, Creekview, Sierra Vista, Regional University, Curry Creek, and the Lincoln SOI expansion, as well as the Sutter Pointe Specific Plan area of Sutter County.

2. a) Will the project encourage the development of more acreage of employment generating land uses in the area (such as commercial, industrial or office)? b) If yes, would it be beyond that which is designated in the current local general plan?

a – *Yes*. Most of the planners, developers, real estate market consultants, and economic development specialists interviewed for this project expressed their professional opinion that, while the Parkway project would not influence the pace or direction of housing development, it was likely to have the effect of stimulating non-residential development, resulting in the buildout of planned industrial and commercial uses sooner than would occur otherwise. b – *No and Yes*. The non-residential development that would be encouraged by the Placer Parkway project would not exceed the levels contemplated in the Sutter County or Placer County General Plans, or the Sunset Industrial Area Plan. However, the project could encourage intensification of employment-generating land uses in the vicinity of intersection locations in the Placer Ranch and the Sutter Pointe Specific Plan areas), and land use plans for these areas have not been finalized or adopted yet.

3. a) Will the project lead to the increase of roadway, intersection, sewer, water supply, or drainage capacity? b) If yes, would it be beyond that projected or planned for in the local general plan?

a – *Yes*. The project would increase regional roadway supply and capacity, and it would provide several new interchanges where none exist at present (it would not affect sewer or water infrastructure availability). The new roadway would provide substantial new east-west traffic capacity and would relieve anticipated local roadway network congestion.

b – *Yes and No*. Placer County's General Plan has shown a concept line for Placer Parkway since 1994. The 1997 Sutter County General Plan does not refer to Placer Parkway, although the concept was included in the South Sutter Specific Plan (approved in 2004, and subsequently rescinded). Plans are being developed for a major east-west thoroughfare to serve the south Sutter Pointe Specific Plan area, which will be incorporated into the Specific Plan for that area, whether or not Placer Parkway is approved and funded (Wilson, 2006). The increase in these capacities would occur as a result of the planned and proposed growth identified in the 2040 development scenario, as these projects would be required to provide roads, intersections, sewer and water infrastructure, and retention and detention facilities as part of their entitlement process. Placer Parkway could result in different land uses, or more intensive land uses, in the vicinity of interchanges where land use plans are still being developed and have not yet been approved. If approved, these projects will by definition be included in the General Plans. As described above, such development is not dependent on Placer Parkway.

4. Will the project encourage the rezoning or reclassification of lands in the community general plan from agriculture, open space or low density residential to a more intensive land use?

No. With its controlled access, an objective of the proposed transportation facility is to strike a balance among advancing planned job growth along the SR 65 and SR 70/99 corridors, avoiding urban growth inducement in areas not designated for development, and helping to preserve the existing rural character of southwestern Placer and southern Sutter counties. The areas Placer County has designated as Agricultural Preserve (80-acre minimum lot size) are located for the most part in the Central Segment, where there would be no interchange access provided to Placer Parkway (unless a Watt Avenue interchange is constructed as a separate future project), and there would be a buffer zone associated with the future roadway. The trend toward rezoning and reclassification of agriculture and open space lands in and adjacent to the Western and Eastern segments has been occurring without an adopted Placer Parkway corridor. The rezoning of low-density residential to more intensive land uses is occurring in the area largely as a result of the SACOG Blueprint process, which some local government entities (such as the City of Roseville) support to promote "smart growth" principles.

5. Is the project not in conformance with the growth related policies, goals or objectives of the local general plan or the area growth management plan? Or is it in conflict with the implementation measures contained in the area's growth management plan?

No. The project is in conformance with local policies, goals, and objectives. It is in conformance with SACOG's Blueprint program, and it is shown in the adopted MTP—as a high-priority regional transportation facility serving the region. It is a part of Placer County's Regional Transportation Plan (2027). It is also shown as a future roadway concept in the Placer County General Plan and it is cited in several Specific Plans that are being prepared for portions of the study area (e.g., Placer Vineyards Revised DEIR). Most of the jurisdictions in the study area anticipated growth and have been developing strategies to try to accommodate anticipated growth without adversely affecting quality of life.

6. Will the project lead to the intensification of development densities or accelerate the schedule for development or will it facilitate actions by private interests to redevelop properties within two miles of an existing or future major arterial roadway or within four miles of a limited access highway interchange?

Yes and No. The project would not lead to intensification of development densities in areas currently under development or being planned for development, but it could accelerate the rate of development, especially in areas near proposed new interchanges. It is not likely to stimulate redevelopment of properties within two miles of the roadway or four miles of interchanges within the project study period (to 2040), because these areas are predominantly undeveloped agricultural land or open space, or have been developed relatively recently with urban uses, or are in the planning stages for mixed use development that should have a constructive life substantially longer than the Placer Parkway project study period (i.e., well beyond 2040).

7. Will the project measurably and significantly decrease home to work commuter travel times to and from or within the project area (more than 10 percent overall reduction or five minutes or more in commute time savings)?

Yes. The transportation impact analysis completed for the evaluation of PSR alternatives indicated that commute time savings for trips from SR 65 to the Sacramento International Airport or downtown could range from 9 to 14 minutes, resulting in commute time savings in excess of 30 percent. The traffic analysis conducted for the five corridor alignment alternatives indicates that there would be reductions in traffic congestion on many local roadways within the study area. It also indicates that the project would "induce" additional travel demand somewhat, as measured by total vehicle miles traveled (VMT), although it would reduce the total number of hours that commuters would experience congested traffic conditions.

8. Is the project directly related to the generation of cumulative effects as defined by CEQA guidelines?

Yes. According to CEQA, "cumulative impacts refer to two or more individual effects which, when considered together, are considerable or which compound or increase other environmental impacts…The cumulative impact from several projects is the change in the environment which results from the incremental impact of the project when added to other closely related past, present and reasonably foreseeable probable future projects." Given the rapid recent urban development around the study area and the number of major new development proposals likely to be approved in the near future, the environmental impacts associated with the Parkway would increase the total universe of impacts to the environment that would result from implementation of all of the recent and foreseeable planned projects, each of which is likely to cause some significant environmental impacts.

6.1.4 FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

The results of the analytical approaches used above are mixed, and it is difficult to draw any simple conclusion regarding the precise relationship between the Placer Parkway project and future growth in the project area. The factors influencing regional growth are complex, and there is no reliable method known for precisely quantifying the influence of a particular transportation facility such as the Placer Parkway on that growth.

Caltrans guidance encourages drawing one of the following four conclusions regarding the growth inducement potential of a project:

- *Not affect growth* – this conclusion can be made when no growth is expected, or when the project would yield no advantages that would have effects on developers' decisions.

- *Cannot determine effect on growth* – this conclusion can be appropriate when only wild guesses can be made about the likely course of growth: this is sometimes the case in rural areas, but in urban areas the analysis should be able to be more precise.

- *Hasten (or slow) growth, intensify growth, or shift growth from elsewhere in the region* – this kind of conclusion can be made when developers are expected to modify their course of development because of the project; the terms "support growth," "contribute to growth," "facilitate growth," or "respond to growth" are less precise ways of making this conclusion.

- *Induce growth* – this conclusion can be made when a larger amount of development would be expected to occur (area wide) during or after the project's construction than otherwise would have been expected in the foreseeable future.

The first conclusion above is not appropriate for Placer Parkway, since the new transportation facility would yield advantages that could affect developers' decisions. For example, the Placer Ranch and Sutter Pointe specific plans are currently being developed and would benefit from the certainty associated with adoption of a specific Placer Parkway corridor.

The second conclusion above is not appropriate for Placer Parkway, since there is clear evidence of likely future growth in the numerous formal proposals for major new master planned developments and SOI expansions, as well as in the pace of land assembly and development option activities in the area.

The third conclusion above could be appropriate, because the project would *hasten growth or contribute to growth* in the region, mainly by facilitating implementation of proposed commercial and industrial development in the Western and Eastern segments of the study area in the study period, but possibly encouraging additional conversion of farmland and open space to urban uses in the long term.

The fourth conclusion above could also be appropriate, because by hastening growth or contributing to growth, more growth would occur with the project than without it in the foreseeable future (e.g., the project study period to 2040). However, as explained below, the growth by 2040 would not be expected to be greater with the Parkway than without the Parkway.

The conclusion drawn from this review of growth factors and influences and application of various analytical approaches is that the Placer Parkway project ***would be growth inducing***, because it would help facilitate planned and proposed developments in the region and it is expected to influence the timing of development in the vicinity of its proposed interchange locations, particularly those proposed near vacant land adjacent to rapidly developing areas or areas now proposed for urban development. At the same time, there are indications that the Placer Parkway's contribution to regional growth is limited, as discussed below.

Land Use Constraints Analysis

Figure 3-1 shows the alignment alternatives in relationship to existing city boundaries and Spheres of Influence, developed unincorporated areas, community plan and redevelopment areas, and major development projects that have been proposed and are undergoing environmental review but that have not yet been approved. The figure also indicates development constraints such as existing habitat conservation areas, 100-year floodplains, and municipal facilities that represent substantial public investment in infrastructure. Based on a review of these features, a study area for secondary and indirect

impacts is indicated on Figure 3-1, outlined in dark purple. This area encompasses the entire Transportation Analysis Study Area as defined for the project (Placer Parkway Corridor Preservation Transportation Analysis Technical Report [DKS, 2007]) and expands it in several ways, including extending it westward to the Sacramento and Feather Rivers (natural features and significant barriers to development). The area was also expanded to the north to encompass all of the City of Lincoln's proposed Sphere of Influence expansion area, as well as to the east to encompass all of the land within the city limits of Roseville and the town limits of Loomis. The paragraphs below discuss the Placer Parkway's potential to induce growth within this area.

The project is not likely to induce growth in the areas of Figure 3-1 that are shown in dark gray, tan, green, or purple shading. The dark gray areas represent existing city limits and approved SOI boundaries. These areas have experienced rapid development in recent decades and are predominantly built out or are expected to be predominantly built out (except for minor infill opportunities) prior to project construction. Much of the existing development in these urbanized areas occurred prior to the Parkway proposal and planned development continues to occur without regard to plans for a new east-west transportation facility in the region. Similarly, the areas shaded in tan are unincorporated areas that are already developed with urban or rural residential uses and thus are unlikely to undergo substantial redevelopment in the next several decades. The areas shaded in green represent existing conservation areas, which present serious constraints to future development, and the areas shaded in light purple indicate areas where there has been substantial public investment in municipal facilities and utilities.

The project could influence proposed land uses or hasten the construction of some proposed uses (which include future conservation areas) in the areas shaded in light gray on Figure 3-1. This is especially probable in the areas surrounding proposed future interchange locations, such as the Sutter Industrial Reserve/Sutter Pointe Specific Plan area in Sutter County and the Placer Ranch Specific Plan area in Placer County. Because the land use plans for these two specific plan areas are still being developed, adoption of a corridor alignment for Placer Parkway could result in proposals for more intensive future land uses in the vicinity of proposed interchanges. The remainder of the Sutter County Industrial Reserve land immediately north of the Sutter Pointe Specific Plan area (approximately 3,000 acres) is also shaded in light gray, because it is currently prohibited from development as part of the Natomas Basin Habitat Conservation Plan agreements between Sutter and Sacramento counties (Wilson, 2006). Placer Parkway is more likely to influence the timing of commercial and industrial development in the light gray areas that lie within the project study area boundary (the black line), as buildout of planned and proposed residential uses in these areas (as well as in the Placer Vineyards and Riolo Vineyard Specific Plan areas to the south) is anticipated by 2020, but absorption of commercial and industrial space is projected to occur more slowly. Development in the Lincoln SOI expansion area (especially the southern portions closest to the proposed Parkway interchanges) is more likely to be hastened by the project, although development pressure in this area is and will continue to be intense even without the project.

In northern Sacramento County, south of the western terminus of the proposed Parkway, the project is unlikely to influence land use patterns, but could play a minor role in influencing the timing of commercial and industrial development, perhaps especially in the vicinity of the Sacramento International Airport. Buildout of residential uses in the North Natomas Unit in the City of Sacramento is expected to occur before 2020, but given the supply of office and industrial space in the greater Sacramento region, buildout of non-residential components is expected to take several decades longer, although this timing is much more likely to be determined by office absorption rates in Sacramento, rather than construction of a new roadway to the north (Mende, 2006). The Natomas Joint Vision Area is still in the early planning stages, but Sutter and Sacramento counties have agreed to retain a one-mile no development zone along the south side of the county boundary, and conceptual plans indicate that a one-mile conservation strip along the east side of the Sacramento River is also being contemplated. The Natomas Joint Vision Area is unlikely to be influenced much by the project, because the pressure to develop this area (south of the

one-mile buffer) is more likely to come from spillover housing demand once the North Natomas Unit residential uses are built out, and also from other urbanization pressures associated with Sacramento's status as a regional job center. In the longer term, improved access provided by the Parkway to land in south Sutter and southwestern Placer counties could be a factor in stimulating additional growth and development in areas not currently proposed for development, as shown on Figure 3-1. Most of the white and blue areas shown on the figure are currently in agricultural and open space use. Infrastructure in this area is generally poorly developed, with farms and homes on individual wells and septic systems, and a considerable portion is subject to 100-year flooding from creeks that have generally sensitive riparian habitat areas. Planners and developers identify other constraints, such as political opposition to development and the lack of water and sewer service, as being as important as freeway access. At the same time, however, the existing constraints to development in southwestern Placer County have not necessarily slowed or limited growth in the area to date.

Much of the land that lies north of the Cross Canal and west of the East Side Canal is protected by 80-acre minimum agricultural zoning and Williamson Act contracts, or is potential giant garter snake habitat with active habitat conservation interests involved in developing conservation easements and conservation area expansions. A review of land ownership maps of this area indicates that it remains in agricultural ownership and has not been subject to land assembly by development interests, as is the case in southwestern Placer County, as discussed below.

The white areas that lie within the central portion of the project study area could come under more intensive development pressure as a result of the project, although no new interchanges are proposed between Fiddyment Road and Pleasant Grove Road. The area surrounding Sunset Boulevard West already appears to be under considerable development pressure, as many of the parcels in this vicinity are being assembled by development interests either for future development or to preserve as conservation areas as mitigation for environmental impacts associated with other planned development activity in the region. A review of land ownership maps updated to November 2006 indicates that more than half of the land between Phillip Road and Dowd Road (from the county line to the City of Lincoln) is now owned by development interests, and according to a source knowledgeable about development activities in this area, much of the rest of it is optioned or in sale or option negotiations (McCoy, 2006). It is impossible to quantify what effect the proposed new roadway project may be contributing to this land assembly activity. No doubt it has contributed to cumulative development pressures in the area to some extent, but the fact that considerable land assembly activity has occurred prior to route adoption, combined with the fact that no new intersections are proposed in the central segment, would indicate that the influence of the project is limited.

Although growth is anticipated throughout the larger secondary and indirect study area over time (as reflected in SACOG's preferred Blueprint scenario), such development is not currently reflected in adopted general plans and has not been formally proposed by landowners. By providing improved access to adjacent areas, Placer Parkway could be one of many factors that would encourage growth in these areas sooner than this might otherwise occur. Thus, it would be growth inducing.

At the same time, there are indications that Placer Parkway's contribution to regional growth may be limited. These include the following:

- no interchanges are proposed within areas that are not already approved or proposed for development;
- all approved and proposed residential development that has not already been built is projected to be built out prior to 2020, when the Parkway is proposed to open; and,

- real estate market pressures in the area have been and continue to be intense without the Parkway, and local government jurisdictions have been supportive of processing development applications in spite of anticipated regional transportation challenges, making it seem likely that much of the approved and proposed development may occur with or without the Placer Parkway.

Comparison of Corridor Alignment Alternatives

It is unlikely that the choice of one Placer Parkway corridor alignment alternative over another would substantially change expected patterns of growth and development in the study area and the surrounding region. In the Western Segment, all corridor alignment alternatives would provide new access to an area that is currently undeveloped farmland, but that is proposed for mixed use urban development. The three more southerly corridor alignments (Alternatives 1, 2, and 3) would provide two interchanges in the Sutter Pointe Specific Plan area, while the more northerly corridor alignments (Alternatives 4 and 5) would provide only one interchange in this area, approximately one mile farther north of the more southerly corridor alignment alternatives in the Western Segment. It could be argued that the more southerly corridor alignment alternatives would be more growth inducing because they would provide more interchanges (and more access) than the more northerly corridor alignment alternatives, in addition to which the northerly corridor alignment alternatives would be farther removed from existing urban development. The entire Sutter Pointe Specific Plan area, however, is slated for urban development and is under relatively intense development pressure, so that it is likely to build out relatively quickly, with or without the Placer Parkway project. (Prior to approving this and other proposed developments, local jurisdictions are required to analyze traffic impacts and evaluate feasible mitigation strategies, and either demonstrate that adequate traffic capacity exists, or require mitigation such as traffic system improvements or payment of "fair share" fees to improve regional facilities, or the lead agency must adopt a statement of overriding considerations in order to approve the project.) The corridor alignment would not serve as an urban limit line in either location, although the more northerly route would provide better access to farmland north of the Sutter Pointe Specific Plan area that is not currently planned or proposed for development (although it is earmarked for eventual future development, as part of Sutter County's remaining Industrial-Commercial Reserve area).

It could also perhaps be argued that Alternatives 4 and 5, which include fewer interchanges than Alternatives 1, 2 and 3, would convert less land area to roadway surface, thereby leaving more land available for contemplated urban uses, which could be seen as facilitating more growth than would occur with two interchanges, which would convert more land to roadway uses. On the other hand, long-term development and redevelopment efforts would likely result in more intensive land uses closer to the intersections. Given the uncertainties surrounding these predictions, there appears to be no basis for finding that one corridor alignment would be more growth inducing than another in the Western Segment. Since none of the corridor alignment alternatives would include any interchanges in the Central Segment, there would be little difference in growth inducement effects among the alternatives in this segment. In the Eastern Segment, all alternatives would follow an identical corridor alignment, so there would be no differences in growth inducement effects among the corridor alignment alternatives.

Watt Avenue Interchange

A future interchange at Watt Avenue could be growth inducing, because it would provide major new regional access to a portion of the study area that is currently rural and undeveloped. This area, however, is also already subject to intense development pressure, as indicated on Figure 3-1. The area surrounding the southerly option is likely to be substantially built out by the time such an interchange is built. The northerly option could stimulate growth in the area between Phillip Road and the Curry Creek Community/Regional University plan areas—one of the few remaining areas in the eastern half of the

central segment that has not been proposed for development yet. Whether a future Watt Avenue interchange would be growth inducing or would be built to meet the needs of existing or planned development would depend upon when it is constructed in relation to entitlements or buildout of specific developments approved for the surrounding area. This would be evaluated in more detail in the separate environmental review process for that project.

6.1.4.1 Secondary and Indirect Impacts Associated with Growth

The following discussion presents a summary of secondary and indirect impacts associated with growth. Additional details of these impacts on the resource categories listed here are provided in the relevant Placer Parkway Tier 1 EIS/EIR technical memoranda. A key term used in this section is "Anticipated Growth." This is defined as the growth that is anticipated in the study area as described in the relevant General Plans and adopted regional forecasts, such as the SACOG Blueprint scenario (as detailed in other sections of this Community Impact Assessment), including additional growth that may occur as a result of major new development proposals that have not yet been formally approved. It is possible that this additional growth may accelerate the rate of buildout in the study area, but it is not ultimately expected to result in any greater levels of development than is presented in adopted regional forecasts.

No-Build Alternative

If the proposed Placer Parkway were not constructed secondary or indirect impacts as a result of anticipated growth are still expected to occur. As described in this section, other planned and proposed development in the study area would be expected to be implemented and potential impacts on environmental and human resources associated with these projects would be subject to independent environmental review. Since it is anticipated that much of the projected growth would occur with or without Placer Parkway, however, it is likely that impacts from growth will be similar to those discussed below.

6.1.4.2 Build Alternatives

Secondary and indirect impacts associated with anticipated growth would be direct impacts of other projects (see Section 3.5.7 and Figure 3-1) not associated with Placer Parkway, and would be required to be analyzed as part of independent environmental review. Although it is not feasible to perform a detailed evaluation of these projects at this stage as specific design details are not known, potential impacts are taken into account in the Placer Parkway 2040 cumulative analysis. This analysis evaluates a 2040 cumulative scenario, presented in Section 3.4.1, which includes full-residential buildout in Placer County west of Sierra College Boulevard, including general plan areas and major developments, and employment and population growth in line with SACOG forecasts. It assumes levels of growth and development will occur at the higher end of a potential feasible range, and therefore represents a reasonable maximum development scenario for which cumulative and secondary and indirect impacts have been analyzed.

A discussion of potential impacts on specific environmental resources is presented below.

Land Use

Anticipated growth could affect land use in the study area through the conversion of land from agricultural use to commercial, residential, and industrial uses. Such growth would also result in the conversion of existing undeveloped and vacant land to similar uses.

Additional information on land use is provided in the CIA for this Tier 1 EIS/EIR (Mara Feeney and Associates and North Fork Associates, 2007).

Farmland

Agricultural Production and Farmland Fragmentation

- Fragmentation and parcel size reduction could reduce the amount of land available for agricultural production and related effects on certain types of agricultural activities that require larger tracts of land to hold down per-unit production costs.
- Impacts on the ability of a farm to compete in the local market against larger producers could be affected.
- Increase in impervious surfaces in the study area could increase surface water runoff and could increase erosion, adversely affecting productivity of agricultural soils. These effects are expected to be offset by water quality requirements imposed on new development.

Transportation Challenges

- Increase in the number of users of roadways, and agricultural machinery and trucks that would have to compete with residential traffic on local roadways. The differences in vehicle speeds and size can create potentially dangerous and frustrating situations for both suburban residents and for agricultural equipment operators.
- In remote areas within the study area, livestock can be driven from pasture to pasture using public and private roads. However, as traffic increases, livestock producers may need to use trucks and trailers to transport livestock as an added safety measure.

Agricultural Support Services

- Possible effects on agricultural viability due to reductions and changes in support services (in turn impacted by changes in customer base).

Additional information on farmlands is provided in the CIA for this Tier 1 EIS/EIR (Mara Feeney and Associates and North Fork Associates, 2007).

Socioeconomic and Community Resources

Social Conditions

- Increased population in the study area, resulting in increased demand for and use of community facilities such as schools, hospitals, places of worship, and emergency support services.
- Additional such facilities would be required, and would be expected to be planned for and provided by Sutter and Placer counties or provided by private sources as part of conditions incorporated into approval of new development proposals.
- Change from a predominantly rural, agricultural area to an area comprising a greater density of mixed-use communities and associated infrastructure and facilities.

Economic Conditions

- Generation of employment and fiscal benefits within the study area, as a result of construction employment and income benefits, and also as a result of revenue and taxes generated and spent by new businesses, employees, and residents. These benefits could be applied to the greater Sacramento region, northern California, or beyond.

Additional information on socioeconomics and community resources is provided in the CIA for this Tier 1 EIS/EIR (Mara Feeney and Associates and North Fork Associates, 2007).

Visual Resources

- Conversion of portions of a rural area into a more urban landscape, resulting in a perceived reduction in the visual quality of the existing natural environment.

- Changes in the type of viewer in the study area, and in changes to the viewer exposure to the area (e.g., number, location, and duration of existing viewers).

- Introduction of numerous commuters to the area, who would experience short-duration views of the surrounding landscape from the Parkway, and would also increase the number of residents and workers in the area who would have longer-duration views of the Parkway and the surrounding area.

- Increase in the urban influences in the study area, consequently adding more "grey" than "green" with future growth (i.e., more pavement and structures than natural elements), a secondary impact of bringing in more urbanization to an area now dominated by rural influences.

Additional information on potential visual resources in the study area is provided in the Visual Impact Assessment prepared for this Tier 1 EIS/EIR (URS, 2007h).

Cultural Resources

- Potential disturbance of both known and as yet unidentified unknown historic properties, archaeological sites, and paleontological resources that may occur in and around the study area. Such resources are generally protected via federal and state regulations, but development could result in adverse impacts to archaeological or historical resources.

Additional information on potential cultural resources in the study area is provided in the Archaeological Survey Report and Historical Resources Evaluation Report prepared for this Tier 1 EIS/EIR (URS, 2007b, 2007c).

Traffic/Transportation

- New roadways would be constructed as part of proposed future developments, which would also contribute to traffic pattern changes. Traffic patterns and volumes changes can affect air quality and noise, and these are discussed below.

- Increase in traffic generated. Changes in traffic patterns, including congestion on some roadway segments (see below).

- Placer Parkway planning to date has been primarily a cooperative and collaborative process aimed at meeting projected travel demand associated with actual and anticipated population and employment growth in the region, rather than an effort aimed at stimulating or facilitating unplanned growth. Thus, traffic generation and traffic congestion relief will be occurring at the same time, as Placer Parkway is intended to alleviate congestion in the study area and will reduce commute times.

Additional information on traffic and transportation in the study area is provided in the Transportation Technical Report prepared for this Tier 1 EIS/EIR (DKS Associates, 2007).

Air Quality

New traffic patterns and increased traffic volumes could adversely affect air quality, particularly if this results in additional congestion on roads in the study area. Although it is not possible to predict with any certainty where such growth-induced congestion might occur, it is reasonable to assume that pollutant emissions associated with such congestion could adversely affect air quality, although this could be wholly or partially offset by the improved Level of Service, decreased vehicle delay, and reduced congestion afforded by the Parkway.

This could occur in a number of ways:

- Increased risk of adverse health effects on humans residing in areas affected by poor air quality;
- Impacts on pollution-sensitive wildlife species, such as lichens; and
- Contribution to climate change associated with higher levels of atmospheric carbon dioxide generated from vehicle emissions. This could be wholly or partially offset by cleaner future vehicle technology and use of alternative fuels.

Additional information on air quality in the study area is provided in the Air Quality Technical Memorandum prepared for this Tier 1 EIS/EIR (URS, 2007a).

Noise

Modified traffic patterns could adversely affect noise, particularly if this results in traffic traveling at higher speeds within the study area. Although precise impacts on future receptors cannot be predicted, it is reasonable to assume that both new and existing developments that would be present in the study area in the future could be affected by noise. Impacts could include the following:

- Increase in overall ambient noise in the area;
- Increased risk of reduced quality of life, and associated adverse health effects on residences, business and facilities located in areas affected by increased noise levels;
- Adverse economic impacts on residences adversely affected by noise; and
- Impacts on noise sensitive wildlife, such as birds, mammals, and reptiles. Impacts are also possible on species that are sensitive to noise, and noise-related disturbance at particular stages of their life cycle, such as during nesting and other breeding activities.

Additional information on noise in the study area is provided in the Traffic Noise Analysis Technical Memorandum prepared for this Tier 1 EIS/EIR (URS, 2007g).

Hydrology and Floodplains

Although it is not possible to predict with any certainty where new impervious surfaces may be created, it is reasonable to assume that impacts associated with reduction in pervious land cover and increased run-off, either directly associated with the construction of the Parkway or as a result of growth induced by the Parkway, could adversely affect floodplains and hydrology. This could occur in a number of ways:

- Contamination of surface water and groundwater through increased erosion and runoff of pollutants;
- Increased peak flows and runoff volumes cause flooding downstream;
- Declining levels of developable land could place additional pressure for continued floodplain encroachment, with its associated adverse effect on wildlife and increased risk of flooding;
- Impacts on aquatic wildlife as a result of increased sedimentation from erosion and run-off; and
- Impacts on aquatic wildlife as a result of constriction or blockage of natural stream flow associated with stream crossings.

Additional information on hydrology and floodplains in the study area is provided in the Hydrology and Floodplain Technical Memorandum prepared for this Tier 1 EIS/EIR (URS, 2007d).

Water Quality

Although it is not possible to predict with any certainty where increased runoff will occur, it is reasonable to assume that secondary and indirect impacts associated with reduction in pervious land cover and increased runoff, either from the construction of the Parkway or as a result of anticipated growth, could adversely affect water quality. This could occur in a number of ways:

- Increased nonpoint source water pollution of surface water bodies through increased runoff from new developments;
- Impacts on aquatic flora and fauna as a result of degraded water quality and increased erosion and sedimentation; and
- Additional contamination of surface water bodies associated with new stream crossings required by new developments.

Additional information on water quality in the study area is provided in the Water Quality Technical Memorandum prepared for this Tier 1 EIS/EIR (URS, 2007i).

Geology, Soils, Seismic and Topography

Anticipated growth would not be expected to have any secondary or indirect impacts on geological, seismic or topographical conditions in the study area. However, new development could affect soils by increasing the amounts of impervious area in the study area, which would increase surface water runoff

and which could increase erosion. Increased erosion can impact agriculture by decreasing soil productivity and can also impact biological resources. Potential impacts on water quality associated with erosion are discussed above.

Biological Resources

Although it is not possible to predict with any certainty where secondary or indirect impacts could occur at this stage, it is reasonable to assume that secondary and indirect impacts as a result of anticipated growth could adversely affect biological resources. This could occur in a number of ways:

- Modification of land, including the fallowing of existing rice fields that are currently irrigated by flooding during the growing season or vernal pool complexes that are currently grazed.

- Loss or degradation of habitat for species that benefit from the current land management practices. Examples of affected habitats might include agricultural areas used by foraging Swainson's hawks, greater sandhill cranes, wintering waterfowl, giant garter snakes, and burrowing owls, as well as grazed vernal pool areas occupied by rare plants.

- A decrease in land management activities might also benefit nesting Swainson's hawks and white-tailed kites, the Valley elderberry longhorn beetle, and riparian habitats that are adversely affected by intensive land management activities.

- Adverse effects on the surrounding natural communities and special-status species. Increased noise and lights would likely decrease the value of such habitat for nesting and foraging, causing disturbance and potentially affecting natural breeding cycles and behavior. Increased impervious surfaces would increase stormwater runoff rates and could have adverse impacts on water quality and on water-dependent wildlife.

- Habitat fragmentation and division of larger tracts of habitat into smaller noncontiguous areas as a result of artificial structures such as roads, buildings, and other infrastructure. Fragmentation lowers habitat quality and can affect particular species that require large tracts of habitat or are vulnerable to disturbance from human activities.

- Where anticipated growth results in new crossings of water bodies and streams, secondary impacts on water quality and aquatic wildlife could occur. Riparian areas associated with creeks are particularly valuable in providing foraging, nesting, and migratory habitat for wildlife species, and could also be adversely impacted, either through direct loss from new development or from the effects of habitat fragmentation.

- Vernal pool complexes would also be susceptible to the effects of fragmentation caused anticipated growth. Development can have effects on the hydrology of vernal pools that are not directly affected. The coverage of land surfaces with concrete and/or deep ripping of the hardpan layer can affect the amount and quality of water available to the perched water tables characteristic of vernal pool areas. Changes to the perched water table can lead to alterations in the rate, extent, and duration of inundation (water regime) of remaining habitat (USFWS, 1996). Survival of vernal pool branchiopods is directly linked to the water regime of their habitat. Roads in or near vernal pool habitat areas can lead to additional impacts through the introduction of chemically laden runoff (i.e., petroleum products).

- Anticipated growth may also produce conditions that are favorable for exotic predators such as bullfrogs and mosquito fish (USFWS, 1996). The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service typically considers any ground-disturbing activities within 250 feet of a vernal pool to comprise an indirect impact.

Additional information on biological resources in the study area is provided in the Natural Environment Study prepared for this Tier 1 EIS/EIR (URS, 2007f).

Hazardous Materials

Anticipated growth could result in the potential disturbance of as yet unknown hazardous sites and potential recognized environmental concerns that may occur in and around the study area. Although it is not possible to predict with any certainty where such sites may be located, it is reasonable to assume that, if not properly investigated and remediated, such disturbance could result in accidental spillage or releases, which could adversely affect human health, soil, air quality, and groundwater or surface water. However, the development review process through state and federal law and regulation is expected to prevent such impacts.

Additional information on hazardous materials in the study area is provided in the Initial Site Assessment prepared for this Tier 1 EIS/EIR (URS, 2007e).

Energy

Anticipated growth would use energy during construction and would consume energy in the form of heating and cooling, lighting, and business operations. Traffic trips associated with such development would also consume energy by increased VMT and trip generation, but such impacts could be wholly or partially offset by cleaner future vehicle technology and use of alternative fuels, and by the improved Level of Service, decreased vehicle delay and reduced congestion afforded by the Parkway. Although overall VMT would increase, the Parkway would result in a reduction of VMT on congested arterials and local streets, which would reduce the extra energy used by vehicles in congested conditions.

6.2 IRREVERSIBLE AND IRRETRIEVABLE COMMITMENTS OF RESOURCES

Preservation of right-of-way for the Placer Parkway corridor would not involve irreversible and irretrievable commitments of resources. If the Parkway were approved and built, a commitment of land and natural resources used for the construction and operation of this transportation facility would result.

When land is converted to a major transportation facility, is it unlikely that such land would ever be reclaimed for its present use. Costs for reclaiming land should the transportation facility be abandoned at a future date would likely preclude such reclamation. Therefore, while not impossible, it is assumed that the land converted for use as the Placer Parkway would represent an irreversible and irretrievable commitment of the land resource.

Future construction of the Placer Parkway would demand considerable amounts of construction materials such as aggregate or cement, fossil fuels, labor, and public capital. The physical materials are generally not retrievable, though some construction materials may be reused or recycled. Labor and public capital will be irretrievably committed when expended on Placer Parkway construction.

The amount of resources irretrievably committed would be similar for all build alternatives. Slightly more resources would be expended depending on the length of the roadway eventually constructed, with Alternative 1 being the longest at 16.2 miles, Alternatives 4 and 5 being the shortest at 14.3 and

14.2 miles, respectively, and Alternatives 2 and 3 falling in between at 15.4 and 15.6 miles, respectively. The No-Build Alternative would not require irreversible and irretrievable commitments of resources.

The commitment of resources is made in anticipation of benefits from improvements in the local and regional transportation system. These benefits include improved vehicular access and circulation, and enhanced efficiency and economy of vehicular travel. These benefits will accrue to area residents, businesses, and visitors. These benefits are expected to outweigh the costs of the permanent commitment of resources descried above.