2.2 Growth

2.2.1 Regulatory Setting

The Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations, which established the steps necessary to comply with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969, require evaluation of the potential environmental effects of all proposed federal activities and programs. This provision includes a requirement to examine indirect effects, which may occur in areas beyond the immediate influence of a proposed action and at some time in the future. The CEQ regulations (40 Code of Federal Regulations 1508.8) refer to these consequences as indirect impacts. Indirect impacts may include changes in land use, economic vitality, and population density, which are all elements of growth.

The California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) also requires the analysis of a project's potential to induce growth. The *State CEQA Guidelines* (Section 15126.2[d]) require 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…"

2.2.2 Affected Environment

The information in this section is based on the *Community Impact Assessment* (May 2023) prepared for the Project and follows the First Cut Screening guidelines provided in Caltrans' *Guidance for Preparers of Growth-Related, Indirect Impact Analysis* (February 2012).

Please refer to Section 2.1, Land Use, for the definitions and figures of the "Study Area" and "Project Area".

2.2.2.1 City of Tustin

According to the State Department of Finance (DOF), the City of Tustin's population was approximately 79,535 as of January 2022 (DOF 2022a). According to the City's General Plan, which was adopted in 2018, the first General Plan iteration in 1966 anticipated an optimum or maximum population of 100,438 persons within the City's planning area (City of Tustin 2018).

The current General Plan points out that a significant portion of transportation problems in Orange County stem from inadequate capacity of the freeway system to serve peak-period travel demands. The most severe congestion occurs at the junction

of I-5 and SR-55, which influences the City's transportation system. Intersecting arterials, such as Newport Avenue, Red Hill Avenue, and Irvine Boulevard, are becoming increasingly congested and receive heavy traffic volumes well in excess of their design capacities; thus, it is not possible for the City to fully address growth management issues in isolation of other jurisdictions (City of Tustin 2018).

2.2.2.2 City of Santa Ana

According to the State DOF, the City of Santa Ana's population was approximately 308,459 as of January 2022 (DOF 2022a). According to the City's current General Plan, which was adopted in 2022, the current population of the City exceeds 300,000 residents (City of Santa Ana 2022).

Santa Ana ranks among the largest and most densely populated cities in the State and is one of the youngest by age in Orange County (City of Santa Ana 2022). The City's central location in Orange County, as well as its proximity to transportation hubs and freeways, make Santa Ana an important economic driver to the region. The City continues to improve upon its circulation system with added mobility systems such as the OC Streetcar project and additional investments in bikeways and pedestrian infrastructure.

2.2.2.3 City of Orange

According to the State DOF, the City of Orange's population was approximately 137,676 as of January 2022 (DOF 2022a). According to the City's current Housing Element, which was adopted in 2022, the forecasted 2020 population of Orange is 143,100 persons (City of Orange 2022).

According to the City's Growth Management Element, Orange continues to balance future growth with continued reinvestment with roadways and other transportation services and facilities. The City recognizes that federal and State highways are a significant part of Orange's transportation system and therefore greatly influence the operation of the City's roadway system. The City is bisected by SR-55 and bounded by SR-91 to the north, SR-57 and I-5 to the west, SR-22 to the south, and the Eastern Transportation Corridor (SR-241) to the east. Coordination with the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) and the Transportation Corridor Agencies regarding future improvements to these roadways is identified to be imperative to prevent unintended traffic impacts on the City's roadway system (City of Orange 2022).

2.2.2.4 City of Anaheim

According to the State DOF, the City of Anaheim's population was approximately 341,245 as of January 2022 (DOF 2022a). According to the City's current Housing Element, which was adopted in 2014, the estimated 2012 population of Anaheim was 343,793 persons (City of Anaheim 2014).

The City is strategically located and traversed by 5 major freeways, 2 State highways, and 18 major and primary arterial highways; thus, the City's mobility and overall quality of life have the potential to be significantly impacted by regional growth pressures. Anaheim is considered to be a fully developed community (City of Anaheim 2014).

2.2.2.5 City of Fullerton

According to the State DOF, the City of Fullerton's population was approximately 142,732 as of January 2022 (DOF 2022a). According to the City's Final Program Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the Fullerton Plan (General Plan), which was adopted in 2012, the 2010 population of Fullerton was 135,314 persons (City of Fullerton 2012).

The City is located between three freeways in the region: SR-57 to the east, SR-91 to the south, and I-5 to the west. Many of Fullerton's arterial roadways extend beyond the borders of the City; thus, the City's growth pressures and the state of the regional circulation system are intertwined.

2.2.2.6 City of Buena Park

According to the State DOF, the City of Buena Park's population was approximately 83,430 as of January 2022 (DOF 2022a). According to the City's General Plan, which was adopted in 2010, the estimated population of Buena Park was 83,385 persons (City of Buena Park 2010).

Buena Park is accessible by I-5 and SR-91, which traverse the center of the City. Many of the City's arterial roadways extend beyond its borders; thus, land use decisions and traffic patterns in adjacent jurisdictions have the potential to affect traffic flow, mobility, and growth pressures in Buena Park and vice versa.

2.2.2.7 City of La Mirada

According to the State DOF, the City of La Mirada's population was approximately 48,696 as of January 2022 (DOF 2022a). According to the City's General Plan, which

was adopted in 2003, the estimated population of the City was 47,000 persons (City of La Mirada 2003).

The General Plan notes that City growth patterns have been shaped largely by accessibility; its industrial businesses utilize I-5 and rail lines to the south, and commercial businesses front I-5 and Imperial Highway, which extends into neighboring jurisdictions in the region. Although La Mirada is considered to be fully developed according to its General Plan buildout scenario, the City continues to experience changing growth patterns as recycling of existing land uses occurs and aging industrial plants slowly transition into modern business parks. Other incremental changes are expected to occur throughout La Mirada.

2.2.3 Environmental Consequences

The potential growth-related impacts of the proposed Project were considered in the context of the first-cut screening approach to assessing the potential growth-influencing effects of the Project and whether any further analysis is necessary based on consideration of the following:

- How, if at all, does the proposed Project potentially change accessibility?
- How, if at all, do the project type, project location, and growth pressure potentially influence growth?
- Is Project-related growth reasonably foreseeable as defined in NEPA? (Under NEPA, indirect impacts need only be evaluated if they are reasonably foreseeable, as opposed to remote and speculative.)
- If there is Project-related growth, how, if at all, will that impact resources of concern?

The potential for the proposed Project to influence growth based on these considerations is discussed below.

2.2.3.1 Temporary Impacts

Build Alternatives (Alternatives 2, 3, and 4)

Any potential growth-related impacts of the Build Alternatives would be permanent. Therefore, there would be no temporary growth-inducing impacts as a result of the Build Alternatives.

No Build Alternative (Alternative 1)

The No Build Alternative would maintain the existing I-5 facility and the current configuration of ramps, high-occupancy vehicle (HOV) lanes, and signage, with the

exception of other proposed projects that are either under development or currently under construction. It would not contribute to or respond to the planned growth in and around the Project Area.

2.2.3.2 Permanent Impacts

Build Alternative (Alternative 2)

The following questions from the First Cut Screening guidelines were considered in determining growth-related impacts to the Study Area cities, Los Angeles County, and Orange County for Alternative 2.

How, if at all, does the proposed project potentially change accessibility?

Alternative 2 would not change accessibility in the Study Area as it would not create or eliminate any road connections. The Study Area is fully developed (except for a small number of vacant infill parcels and undevelopable areas), consisting of open space, commercial uses, industrial uses, mixed uses, public uses, institutional uses, and low-, medium-, and high-density residential uses.

How, if at all, do the project type, project location, and growth pressure potentially influence growth?

As noted above, Alternative 2 would not change accessibility in the Study Area as it would not create or eliminate any road connections. The Study Area is fully developed (except for a small number of vacant infill parcels and undevelopable areas), consisting of open space, commercial uses, industrial uses, mixed uses, public uses, institutional uses, and low-, medium-, and high-density residential uses.

Although Alternative 2 would not add lane capacity, Alternative 2 is intended to accommodate approved and planned growth in the Study Area because it would improve speeds in the HOV lane (fewer vehicles but requires 3+ passengers per vehicle), especially during the peak hours along I-5, therefore reducing congestion in the Study Area. The proposed addition of two park-and-ride facilities within the I-5 right-of-way (ROW) under Alternative 2 would also encourage the movement of additional people in fewer vehicles in the HOV lanes. Pressure for growth is typically a result of a combination of factors, including economic, market, and land use demands and conditions. Growth in the Study Area is expected to occur with or without Alternative 2.

Alternative 2 may encourage changes in driving behavior by enticing some drivers to form carpools with other motorists who need to travel in the same direction at the

same time so they can take advantage of the faster-moving HOV lanes, but it is not expected to make growth in the Study Area more attractive given the limited influence that it would have on driving habits across Orange County. A substantial number of development projects were proposed and approved prior to the initiation of the proposed Project, which indicates that development within the Study Area is not dependent on completion of Alternative 2. Therefore, although Alternative 2 would accommodate existing and planned growth, it would not influence growth beyond what is currently planned. Growth is anticipated to occur in these areas regardless of whether Alternative 2 is completed, and this growth has already been accounted for in local and regional planning documents.

Is project-related growth reasonably foreseeable as defined in NEPA?

Under NEPA, indirect impacts need only be evaluated if they are reasonably foreseeable, rather than remote and speculative. As discussed above, Alternative 2 would not influence the rate, type, amount, and/or location of growth in the Study Area cities beyond what is planned for the area. It is also speculative to estimate how much the area would grow under the influence of Alternative 2.

If there is project-related growth, how, if at all, will that impact resources of concern?

Based on the analysis described above, Alternative 2 would not result in any growth-related effects and, therefore, would not result in growth-related impacts on any resources of concern. No further analysis is necessary.

Build Alternative (Alternative 3)

The following questions were considered in determining growth-related impacts to the Study Area cities, Los Angeles County, and Orange County for Alternative 3.

How, if at all, does the proposed project potentially change accessibility?

Alternative 3 would alleviate HOV lane deficiencies and accommodate projected future traffic volumes in the traffic Study Area, consistent with adopted local land use and transportation plans. Alternative 3 includes improvements to I-5 via the conversion of existing HOV lanes to Express Lanes (ELs), along with ramp improvements, overcrossing/undercrossing improvements, and advance signage improvements within specific locations along I-5 and in specific local arterial locations. Alternative 3 would not provide new transportation facilities (conversion of the existing HOV lanes to ELs), nor would it create new access points to areas

previously not accessible. Therefore, Alternative 3 would not result in changes in accessibility to the transportation system in the Study Area.

How, if at all, do the project type, project location, and growth pressure potentially influence growth?

As noted above, Alternative 3 would not change accessibility in the Study Area as it would not create or eliminate any road connections. The Study Area is fully developed (except for a small amount of vacant infill parcels and undevelopable areas), consisting of open space, commercial uses, industrial uses, mixed uses, public uses, institutional uses, and low-, medium-, and high-density residential uses.

Alternative 3 is intended to accommodate approved and planned growth in the Study Area because it would price-manage the EL facility to ensure trip time reliability and encourage carpool and transit use along I-5, thereby reducing congestion in the Study Area. Pressure for growth is typically a result of a combination of factors, including economic, market, and land use demands and conditions. Growth in the Study Area is expected to occur with or without Alternative 3.

Alternative 3 may allow growth in the Study Area to be more attractive; however, a substantial number of development projects were proposed and approved prior to the initiation of the proposed Project, which indicates that development within the Study Area is not dependent on completion of Alternative 3. Therefore, although Alternative 3 would accommodate existing and planned growth, it would not influence growth beyond what is currently planned. Growth is anticipated to occur in these areas regardless of whether Alternative 3 is completed, and this growth has already been accounted for in local and regional planning documents.

Is project-related growth reasonably foreseeable as defined in NEPA?

Under NEPA, indirect impacts need only be evaluated if they are reasonably foreseeable, rather than remote and speculative. As discussed above, Alternative 3 would not influence the rate, type, amount, and/or location of growth in the Study Area cities beyond what is currently planned for the area. It is also speculative to estimate how much the area would grow under the influence of Alternative 3.

If there is project-related growth, how, if at all, will that impact resources of concern?

Based on the analysis described above, Alternative 3 would not result in any growth-related effects and, therefore, would not result in growth-related impacts on any resources of concern. No further analysis is necessary.

Build Alternative (Alternative 4)

The following questions were considered in determining growth-related impacts to the Study Area cities, Los Angeles County, and Orange County for Alternative 4.

How, if at all, does the proposed project potentially change accessibility?

Alternative 4 includes improvements to I-5 via the conversion of existing HOV lanes to ELs, the addition of ELs between the SR-57 and SR-91, applicable freeway widening, ramp improvements, overcrossing/undercrossing improvements, and advance signage improvements within specific locations along I-5 and in specific local arterial locations. Despite the additional ELs between SR-57 and SR-91, Alternative 4 would not provide new transportation facilities (the additional ELs would occur on an existing freeway facility), nor would it create new access points to areas previously not accessible.

How, if at all, do the project type, project location, and growth pressure potentially influence growth?

As noted above, Alternative 4 would not change accessibility in the Study Area as it would not create or eliminate any road connections. The Study Area is fully developed (except for a small amount of vacant infill parcels and undevelopable areas), consisting of open space, commercial uses, industrial uses, mixed uses, public uses, institutional uses, and low-, medium-, and high-density residential uses.

Alternative 4 is intended to accommodate approved and planned growth in the Study Area because it would add EL capacity along I-5, thereby reducing congestion in the Study Area. Pressure for growth is typically a result of a combination of factors, including economic, market, and land use demands and conditions. Growth in the Project area is expected to occur with or without Alternative 4.

As a capacity enhancement to an existing freeway facility, including the additional ELs between SR-57 and SR-91, Alternative 4 may make growth in the Study Area Study Area more attractive; however, a substantial number of development projects were proposed and approved prior to the initiation of the proposed Project, which

indicates that development within the Study Area is not dependent on completion of Alternative 4. Therefore, although Alternative 4 would accommodate existing and planned growth, it would not influence growth beyond what is currently planned. Growth is anticipated to occur in these areas regardless of whether Alternative 4 is completed, and this growth has already been accounted for in local and regional planning documents.

Is project-related growth reasonably foreseeable as defined in NEPA?

Under NEPA, indirect impacts need only be evaluated if they are reasonably foreseeable, rather than remote and speculative. As discussed above, Alternative 4 would not influence the rate, type, amount, and/or location in the Study Area cities beyond what is currently planned for the area. It is also speculative to estimate how much the area would grow under the influence of Alternative 4.

If there is project-related growth, how, if at all, will that impact resources of concern?

Based on the analysis described above, Alternative 4 would not result in any growth-related effects and, therefore, would not result in growth-related impacts on any resources of concern. No further analysis is necessary.

No Build Alternative (Alternative 1)

Under the No Build Alternative, no improvements would be made to I-5 or any of the ramps, auxiliary lanes, overcrossing and undercrossings, and signage in the Project Area. The freeway facility would remain as is, with the exception of other proposed projects that are either under development or currently under construction. The No Build Alternative would not change accessibility around the I-5 corridor in the Study Area cities and would not reduce delays and congestion along the I-5 corridor. Over time, forecasted growth of the Study Area cities and the surrounding areas may be constrained due to continued HOV lane degradation and conditions on I-5. In addition, the Study Area is fully urbanized. Therefore, the No Build Alternative would not influence growth patterns and would not result in any impacts on resources of concern in any of the Study Area cities, Los Angeles County, and Orange County.

2.2.4 Avoidance, Minimization, and/or Mitigation Measures

The Build Alternatives would not result in a substantial growth-related impact. No further growth analysis is necessary. Therefore, no avoidance, minimization, or mitigation measures are proposed.

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