

# 1. INTRODUCTION

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## 1.1 OVERVIEW

On May 7, 2020, the Regional Council adopted Resolution No. 20-621-1 certifying the Program Environmental Impact Report (PEIR) for the 2020-2045 Regional Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategies (“RTP/SCS,” “Connect SoCal” or “Plan”) for federal transportation conformity purposes only. This PEIR addendum for the Plan, which is proposed to be adopted in its entirety, is prepared by the Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG). This addendum is prepared in compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act (Pub. Resources Code, § 21000 et seq.; hereinafter “CEQA”) and the Guidelines for the Implementation of CEQA (Cal. Code Regs., tit. 14, § 15000, et seq.; hereinafter “Guidelines”).

The Draft PEIR was circulated for a 46-day public comment and review period (from December 9, 2019 to January 24, 2020). On May 7, 2020, during the hearing on the Plan, the Regional Council delayed adoption of the Plan in its entirety for a period of up to 120 days, during which time SCAG was directed to engage with local jurisdictions to make refinements to the Plan’s Growth Forecast in relation to entitlements, and to conduct analysis on the differences within the Sustainable Communities Strategy (SCS) and locally-approved General Plans, this process resulted in SCAG undertaking additional technical refinements to reflect adjustments at the sub-jurisdictional level. These shifts in housing and jobs are limited to a total of six jurisdictions. SCAG then assessed whether the technical refinements would potentially result in any additional environmental impacts beyond the impacts identified in the Final PEIR, which would warrant further environmental review. Since the technical refinements resulted in minimal impacts to Connect SoCal performance results, and the Plan still achieves federal Transportation Conformity and meets the State’s greenhouse gas reduction targets for passenger vehicles for 2020 and 2035, the need for additional environmental review was determined to not be necessary and a PEIR Addendum was determined to be appropriate.

After the PEIR comment and review period ended, and just prior to the May 7, 2020 PEIR hearing, SCAG received two comment letters from the Center for Biological Diversity (CBD) (May 1, 2020, and May 6, 2020). In the letters, CBD requested expanded background information be added to the PEIR related to environmental setting and environmental impacts, as well as the consideration of other mitigation measures. While SCAG is not obligated to respond to late comments, in the interest of providing as much information to the public as possible, SCAG is addressing CBD’s comments and incorporating additional information in this Addendum.

In sum, this Addendum comprises two parts, 1) SCAG's analysis of the technical refinements to the SCS, addressed in **Chapter 2.0, Technical Refinements to the Plan and Environmental Effects**; and 2) clarification and addition of information identified by CBD, addressed in **Chapters 3.0, PEIR Clarifications** and **4.0, Mitigation Measures** (detailed responses to both CBD comment letters are included in **Appendix A**). This Addendum concludes the PEIR is sufficient for addressing the potential environmental impacts and mitigation measures for the Plan.

Based on substantial evidence provided in this Addendum, the Final PEIR and other materials in the record, SCAG determines that the impacts of the Plan, including the technical refinements to the SCS and additional clarifications as identified by CBD, fall within the analyses in the Final EIR. Therefore, none of the following (as identified in CEQA Guidelines Section 15162) would result from the technical refinements and/or clarified information, analyses and mitigation measures:

- One or more significant effects not discussed in the PEIR.
- Substantial increase in the severity of a previously identified significant effect.
- New mitigation measures or alternatives that were previously found not to be feasible would be, in fact, be feasible and would substantially reduce on or more significant effects of the project but are declined to be adopted by the project proponent.
- Mitigation measures that are considerably different from those analyzed in the EIR that would substantially reduce on or more significant effects but are declined to be adopted.

Thus, neither a subsequent nor supplemental environmental impact report is required (Pub. Resources Code, § 21166; Guidelines §§ 15162, 15163). However, some minor refinements to the PEIR are included in this Addendum in accordance with CEQA (Guidelines § 15164).

**Chapter 1.0, Introduction.** Chapter 1.0 describes the purpose and organization of this document. The introduction includes applicable statutory sections of the Public Resources Code and Guidelines, and a brief planning history.

**Chapter 2.0, Technical Refinements to the Plan and Environmental Effects.** Chapter 2.0 describes the technical refinements and discusses the extent to which the changes would have effects on the environment.

**Chapter 3.0, PEIR Clarifications.** Chapter 3.0 discusses refinements to the regulatory framework, existing conditions and analyses.

**Chapter 4.0, Mitigation Measures.** Chapter 4.0 provides a list of refined SCAG and project-level mitigation measures. The proposed SCAG and project-level mitigation measures have been expanded to in the areas of air quality, biological resources, greenhouse gases, and wildlife and to provide additional clarity in terms of roles and responsibilities.

**Appendix A.** The Appendix includes responses to comments received on the PEIR from the Center for Biological Diversity.

## 1.2 PROJECT LOCATION

The Project location includes the entire SCAG region, which includes the following counties: Ventura, Los Angeles, San Bernardino, Riverside, Orange, and Imperial.

## 1.3 LEAD AGENCY AND ADDRESS

Southern California Association of Governments  
900 Wilshire Boulevard, 17<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Los Angeles, CA 90017

## 1.4 CONTACT PERSON AND PHONE NUMBER

Mr. Roland Ok  
Senior Regional Planner, SCAG  
Phone: (213) 236-1819  
Email: [ok@scag.ca.gov](mailto:ok@scag.ca.gov)

## 1.5 STATUTORY AUTHORITY

CEQA recognizes that between the date an environmental document for a project is completed and the date that a project is fully implemented, one or more of the following changes may occur: 1) the project may change, 2) the environmental setting in which the project is set may change, and/or 3) previously unknown information can arise. Before proceeding with a project within the scope of a previously certified EIR, CEQA requires the lead agency to evaluate these changes to determine whether they affect the conclusions in the prior environmental document.

When an EIR has been certified and a project within the scope of that evaluated in a previous EIR is modified or otherwise changed after certification, additional CEQA review may be necessary. The key considerations in determining the need for the appropriate type of additional CEQA review are outlined in Public Resources Code section 21166 and Guidelines sections 15162 through 15164. Guidelines section 15162, subdivision a, provides that a subsequent EIR is not required unless any of the following occurs:

- (1) Substantial changes are proposed in the project which will require major revisions of the previous EIR or negative declaration due to the involvement of new significant environmental effects or a substantial increase in the severity of previously identified significant effects.
- (2) Substantial changes occur with respect to the circumstances under which the project is undertaken which will require major revisions of the previous EIR or Negative Declaration due to the involvement of new significant environmental effects or a substantial increase in the severity of previously identified significant effects.
- (3) New information of substantial importance, which was not known and could not have been known with the exercise of reasonable diligence at the time the previous EIR was certified as complete or the Negative Declaration was adopted, shows any of the following:
  - (A) The project will have one or more significant effects not discussed in the previous EIR or negative declaration;
  - (B) Significant effects previously examined will be substantially more severe than shown in the previous EIR;
  - (C) Mitigation measures or alternatives previously found not to be feasible would in fact be feasible, and would substantially reduce one or more significant effects of the project, but the project proponents decline to adopt the mitigation measure or alternative; and/or
  - (D) Mitigation measures or alternatives which are considerably different from those analyzed in the previous EIR would substantially reduce one or more significant effects on the environment, but the project proponents decline to adopt the mitigation measure or alternative.

If a subsequent EIR is required pursuant to Guidelines section 15162, subdivision a, a supplemental EIR may be prepared instead if "only minor additions or changes would be necessary to make the previous EIR adequately apply to the project in the changed situation" (Guidelines, § 15163, subd. (a)).

If a subsequent EIR is not required pursuant to Guidelines section 15162, subdivision a, then the lead agency shall determine the appropriate further CEQA documentation, including no further documentation at all (Guidelines, § 15162, subd. (a)).

However, if a subsequent EIR is not required pursuant to Guidelines section 15162, subdivision a, but some changes or additions to the certified EIR have become necessary, an addendum is required (Guidelines, § 15164, subd. (a)). An addendum must include a brief explanation of the agency's decision not to prepare a

subsequent EIR, supported by substantial evidence in the record (Guidelines, §15164, subd. (e)). The addendum to the EIR need not be circulated for public review, but it may be included in or attached to the final EIR (Guidelines, § 15164, subd. (c)). The decision-making body must consider the addendum and the final EIR prior to making a decision on the project (Guidelines, § 15164, subd. (d)).

## 1.6 PLANNING HISTORY

The NOP was sent to the State Clearinghouse on January 23, 2019; posted with the County Clerks for the six counties in the SCAG region; and distributed to various federal, state, regional and local government agencies, and other interested agencies, organizations, and individuals. The NOP was made available on SCAG's website at <https://www.connectsocial.org/Documents/PEIR/NOP-PEIR-ConnectSoCal.pdf>. The NOP was published in 12 newspapers, including the Los Angeles Times, and additional newspapers that address the large geographic reach and diverse population within the SCAG region:

- Desert Sun
- Imperial Valley
- La Opinion
- Los Angeles Sentinel
- Los Angeles Times
- Nguoi Viet
- Press Enterprise
- San Bernardino County Sun
- The Korean Times
- The OC Register
- Ventura County Star
- World Journal (Chinese Daily News)

The NOP was circulated primarily using electronic mail to over 500 interested parties, including representatives of Native American tribes. The NOP was mailed directly to approximately 100 interested parties, including federal, state, regional and local agencies, organizations and major libraries in the region using the U.S. Postal Service certified mail service. The NOP was also posted at the following locations:

SCAG Main Office  
900 Wilshire Boulevard, 17th Floor,  
Los Angeles, CA 90017

SCAG Riverside County Regional Office  
3403 10th Street, Suite 805  
Riverside, CA 92501

SCAG Imperial County Regional Office  
1503 N. Imperial Avenue, Suite 104  
El Centro, CA 92243

SCAG San Bernardino County Regional Office  
1170 West 3rd Street, Suite 140  
San Bernardino, CA 92410

SCAG Orange County Regional Office  
600 South Main Street, Suite 741  
Orange, CA 92868

The NOP provided notification of the two public scoping meetings for interested parties to receive information on the Plan and the related CEQA process as well as providing an opportunity for the submittal of comments both by mail and electronically.

The Plan was developed with input from the public in accordance with the adopted Public Participation Plan. SCAG conducted 28 open house workshops on the Plan between June and July 2019.<sup>1</sup> These goals of these events was to share the purpose of Connect SoCal, introduce and provide information on policies and strategies under consideration, describe the performance outcomes of the different policy choices and receive input from participants. Scenarios were developed to help facilitate discussion during the development of the Draft Plan and to evaluate how each scenario would perform in terms of meeting the goals and guiding policies of the Plan and other performance metrics. SCAG also broadened its participation activities in the development of the Plan to engage a more extensive group of stakeholders in its planning and programming processes. SCAG held five public workshops on environmental justice for the Plan.

The Draft Plan was released by the Regional Council for a 70-day public comment and review period (from November 14, 2019 to January 24, 2020), while the Draft PEIR circulated for a 46-day public comment and review period. The public review and comment period for the Draft PEIR occurred between December 9, 2019 and January 24, 2020. To help further inform local, state and federal agencies, and other interested agencies, organizations, and individuals (“Interested Parties”) about the elements of the Draft Plan, SCAG posted announcements and videos on its website, blog sites, and its social networking pages (Facebook, Twitter); prepared factsheets and other outreach materials in English, Spanish, Chinese, Korean and Vietnamese; and placed ads and public announcements in 12 newspapers, including the ethnic press. During public review and comment period for the Draft Plan, SCAG held public workshops related to the Plan and a separate workshop on the PEIR.

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<sup>1</sup> Southern California Association of Governments, Public Participation and Consultation Report, November 2019

Based on comments received during the public review period, SCAG prepared the Final PEIR to fulfill the basic purposes of CEQA,<sup>2</sup> which are:

- To disclose to the decision-makers and the public significant environmental effects of the proposed activities.
- To identify ways to avoid or reduce environmental damage.
- To prevent environmental damage by requiring implementation of feasible alternatives or mitigation measures.
- To disclose to the public reasons for agency approvals of projects with significant environmental effects.
- To foster interagency coordination in the review of projects.
- To enhance public participation in the planning process.

On May 7, 2020, the Regional Council adopted Resolution No. 20-621-1 certifying the Connect SoCal PEIR and approving Connect SoCal for federal conformity purposes only. The Resolution postponed for up to 120 days the date by which the Regional Council would be asked to consider approval of Connect SoCal in its entirety and for all other purposes, including but not limited to submittal to the California Air Resources Board (CARB). This delay allowed for more time to review Connect SoCal and consider its implications in light of the short and long-term impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the region as requested by many stakeholders, and to make refinements to the Plan's Growth Forecast in relation to entitlement information. Since the technical refinements resulted in minimal impacts to the performance of Connect SoCal, this addendum was determined to be the appropriate level of environmental review.

## 1.7 SUMMARY OF ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS

This Addendum will consider whether technical refinements at the sub jurisdictional level, undertaken to capture shifts in jobs and housing would result in a new significant environmental impact or more severe significant environmental impacts than previously identified in the Final PEIR, thereby, requiring a major revision to the EIR.

**Chapter 2.0, Technical Refinements to the Plan and Environmental Effects**, of this Addendum includes a detailed evaluation of environmental effects associated with the technical refinements, as compared to impacts identified in the Final PEIR for each CEQA environmental factor area, organized in the same manner as the Final PEIR. **Chapters 3.0, PEIR Clarifications**, and **4.0, Mitigation Measures**, include

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<sup>2</sup> CEQA Guidelines § 15002.

updated and expanded regulatory framework and setting information as well as clarified analyses and revised mitigation measures. These refinements to the PEIR clarify and amplify the existing document and do not change the analyses or impact determinations provided within the Final PEIR.

As indicated in **Chapters 2.0, Technical Refinements to the Plan and Environmental Effects, 3.0, PEIR Clarifications, and 4.0, Mitigation Measures**, this Addendum does not identify any of the following: 1) substantial changes that require major revisions to the Final PEIR; 2) substantial changes to circumstances, related to significant effects, that require major revisions to the Final PEIR; 3) new information of substantial importance which was not known and could not have been known at the time to Final PEIR was certified. Therefore, none of the conditions that require the preparation of a subsequent or supplemental PEIR under Guidelines sections 15162 and 15163 would apply, and an Addendum to the Final PEIR is the appropriate CEQA document.

## 1.8 INCORPORATION BY REFERENCE

The following documents were used in the preparation of this Addendum, and are incorporated herein by reference, consistent with Section 15150 of the Guidelines:

- Southern California Association of Governments, Certified Final Connect SoCal PEIR, certified May 7, 2020. Available online at: <https://www.connectsocial.org/Pages/Final-2020-PEIR.aspx>
- The Connect SoCal Plan is available on SCAG's website at: <https://www.connectsocial.org/Pages/Connect-SoCal-Final-Plan.aspx>