

Letter 31

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Comment 31-1

Commenter prefers LOS be removed, as proposed by OPR on January 8, 2009, but recognizes and supports broadening the Appendix G Transportation/Traffic checklist question to include an array of measures and standards. As proposed, the Checklist question (b) would help align transportation and land use planning to benefit the City/County of San Francisco with the state's climate goals mandated in AB32 and related law.

Response 31-1

The Natural Resources Agency revised Appendix G, section XVI checklist question (b) to put level of service standards in their proper context within a congestion management program. More generally, Appendix G has been revised to recognize a lead agency's discretion to choose the most appropriate methodology for analyzing impacts to its circulation system. The focus of section XVI has been changed from a strict analysis of street level impacts to a broader consideration of the overall circulation system's performance. As explained in the Initial Statement of Reasons, a project may degrade local traffic conditions but yield an overall benefit to the regional transportation system. (Initial Statement of Reasons at pg. 65.) See Thematic Responses in the Final Statement of Reasons regarding Level of Service and transportation analysis for additional discussion.

The Office of Planning and Research explained why it revised its preliminary proposal regarding traffic impact analysis in its letter transmitting the proposed Guidelines amendments to the Natural Resources Agency. That letter explained:

After considering public input, OPR recommends inclusion of revised questions in the Environmental Checklist that recognizes the following: (a) the necessity of assessing traffic impacts on intersections, streets, highways, and freeways, (b) a lead agency's discretion to choose its own methodology, including LOS, to assess traffic impacts, (c) existing requirements in Congestion Management Programs, General Plans, ordinances, and elsewhere, and (d) traffic impacts to pedestrian, non-vehicular and mass-transit circulation.

In light of the above, the Natural Resources Agency finds that no further revision to the text is required in response to this comment.

Comment 31-2

Revise Appendix G: Transportation/Traffic question (a) to replace roadway capacity with a broader direction to consider locally-adopted measures of effectiveness for the broader circulation system. Suggested language added.

Response 31-2

In response to comments similar to such as this, the Natural Resources Agency further revised question (a) of the Appendix G, section XVI checklist. The revised text maintains the lead agency's discretion to choose the most appropriate methodology to assess impacts within its jurisdiction. As explained above, question (a) was refocused to allow consideration of the circulation system as a whole, not on a project's impact to roadway capacity. Notably, however, the Natural Resources Agency did not limit the plans and ordinances that might contain measures of effectiveness to "local" plans. The analysis of impacts cannot be limited to just the lead agency's jurisdiction; therefore, measures of effectiveness contained in several different plans or policies may need to be considered depending on the scope of the project and its impacts. No further revision to the text is required to respond to this comment.

Comment 31-3

Revise Appendix G: Transportation/Traffic title to "Transportation". Traffic is redundant and inappropriately suggests CEQA reinforces an automobile oriented perspective.

Response 31-3

This section of Appendix G is entitled "Transportation/Traffic" in the existing CEQA Guidelines, and the Natural Resources Agency does not propose to amend the title. Section 21081.2(e) suggests that "traffic" is an appropriate consideration in CEQA. Therefore, the Natural Resources Agency declines to remove the term "traffic" from the section title.

Comment 31-4

Revisions to Appendix G: Transportation/Traffic checklist support lead agencies in developing and adopting alternative metrics to replace LOS like "Automobile Trip Generation".

Response 31-4

The Natural Resources Agency notes the commenter's support of revisions to Appendix G, Section XVI checklist question (a). The Natural Resources Agency intentionally left it to the discretion of the lead agency to choose the most appropriate methodology to assess impacts within its jurisdiction. Specifying a particular mode of analysis would limit that discretion. Absent a legislative directive to use a specific

methodology, the Natural Resources Agency chooses to emphasize a lead agency's discretion in the Appendix G checklist. No further revision to the text is required to respond to this comment.

Comment 31-5

Commenter supports the removal of parking from the Appendix G checklist. Doing so acknowledges parking is a social matter, not an environmental matter, thus inappropriate for purposes of a CEQA analysis.

Response 31-5

The Natural Resources Agency notes the commenter's support of revisions to Appendix G, Section XVI to remove parking from the checklist. However, as explained in the Initial Statement of Reasons, if there is substantial evidence indicating adverse environmental impacts from a project related to parking capacity, the agency must address such potential impacts regardless of whether the checklist contains parking questions. (Initial Statement of Reasons at pg. 66.)