

Lockey, Heather@CNRA

From: Fogg, Mindy <mfogg@co.santa-barbara.ca.us>
Sent: Monday, March 12, 2018 2:37 PM
To: CEQA Guidelines@CNRA
Subject: County of Santa Barbara Comments on CEQA Guidelines Update
Attachments: NatResAgency_03-12-18.pdf; Attachment_PD Comment Letter 02-29-16.pdf

Please find attached the County of Santa Barbara's comments on the Amendments and Additions to the State CEQA Guidelines.

Mindy Fogg

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County of Santa Barbara Planning and Development

Glenn S. Russell, Ph.D., Director
Dianne Black, Assistant Director

March 12, 2018

Christopher Calfee, Deputy Secretary and General Counsel
California Natural Resources Agency
1416 Ninth Street, Suite 1311
Sacramento, CA 95814

Sent via email to: CEQA.Guidelines@resources.ca.gov

**RE: Amendments and Additions to the State California Environmental Quality Act
(CEQA) Guidelines**

Dear Mr. Calfee:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the CEQA Guidelines Update. The County of Santa Barbara appreciates all the effort from the Office of Planning and Research that went into the amendments. While we have no new comments on the current proposal, we still have lingering concerns regarding the updates to Transportation Impacts stemming from Senate Bill 743. Attached is our letter on the January 20, 2016, draft proposal, which we respectfully submit to your agency for consideration.

If you have any questions or comments regarding this letter, or would like to discuss these issues further, please call Mindy Fogg at (805) 884-6848.

Sincerely,

Glenn S. Russell, Ph.D., Director

Attachments:

County of Santa Barbara Comment Letter to OPR dated February 29, 2016

cc: File



County of Santa Barbara Planning and Development

Glenn S. Russell, Ph.D., Director

Dianne Black, Assistant Director

February 29, 2016

Mr. Christopher Calfee
Senior Counsel
Governor's Office of Planning and Research
1400 Tenth Street
Sacramento, CA 95814

Via email to: CEQA.Guidelines@ceres.ca.gov

**RE: Revised Proposal on Updates to the CEQA Guidelines on Evaluating
Transportation Impacts in CEQA – Implementing Senate Bill 743**

Dear Mr. Calfee:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Revised Proposal to Update the CEQA Guidelines Implementing Senate Bill 743, dated January 20, 2016. The County appreciates the effort that went into this proposal, including the responses to public comments, the simplified statutes/guidelines, and the detailed Technical Advisory. The following comments focus primarily on the County's remaining concerns regarding implementation of the updated guidelines:

1. The County appreciates that the recommended threshold of a 15 percent reduction in VMT over existing conditions is discussed in the Technical Advisory rather than in the statutes/guidelines. County staff continues to have concerns that:
 - This threshold will trigger individual EIRs for small/medium projects that are consistent with planned growth in our communities and their associated land use designations.
 - The suggested alternatives and mitigation measures (Technical Advisory Section G) are not feasible for small/medium projects in rural or semi-rural areas. In fact, the only types of projects that could implement measures (such as access to transit, access to goods and services, affordable housing, improvement of bicycle/pedestrian networks, etc.) in unincorporated lands are large projects that would have other types of significant impacts on the County's environmental resources.
 - The guidance and case studies in the Technical Advisory to help lead agencies apply this threshold do not account for jurisdictions like Santa Barbara with expansive rural areas and remote urban communities.

2. With regard to the above concerns, additional recommendations on how to address VMT programmatically in large unincorporated areas would be helpful. The County of Santa Barbara has an approved Climate Action Plan and continues to take progressive steps toward reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Based on OPR's Revised Proposal, it is clear that the County will need to take further steps to reduce VMT; however, it is still unclear what those steps should or could be. Measures such as adding alternative transportation systems, restricting parking, adding mixed uses, or increasing access to transit are not feasible in rural and semi-rural areas.
3. County staff has the following concerns related to recommendations in the Technical Advisory:
 - The guidance states that lead agencies should address the full area over which the project affects travel behavior, even if the effect crosses political boundaries. Without additional guidance or examples showing reasonable extent, this analysis will likely be too burdensome and result in an unrealistic assessment of project effects.
 - The arbitrary screening threshold of 100 trips/day across the board for small projects makes it difficult for lead agencies to set regionally-specific screening criteria and will likely set a fair argument standard that unnecessarily triggers EIRs for medium-sized projects.
 - Additional guidance should be provided on setting a baseline for existing conditions given that regional VMT can change with time.
4. As a final note, the County is concerned that this update will invalidate the transportation impact sections of existing certified EIRs or adopted NDs/MNDs due to a change in circumstances (CCR§15162). The CEQA Statutes and Guidelines encourage tiering from existing environmental documents whenever feasible (PRC §21093). County staff recommends that a grandfathering process be set forth to allow continued use of CEQA documents that were certified/adopted by a given date.

Please consider these comments when finalizing your proposal. If you have any questions or comments regarding this letter, or would like to discuss these issues further, please call Mindy Fogg at (805) 884-6848.

Sincerely,



Glenn S. Russell, Ph.D., Director

cc: File