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## **Natural Resources Agency Seeks Public Comment on Proposed Update to State's Environmental Review Process**

SACRAMENTO -- The California Natural Resources Agency today issued a [Notice of Proposed Rulemaking](#) on updated state guidelines for implementing the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), including new regulations that will streamline review of projects that improve air quality and public health.

Public comment on the proposal is due by **5 p.m. March 15**, and public hearings will be held in Sacramento and Los Angeles as follows:

**Sacramento**

March 15, 2018

1:30 p.m.-4:30 p.m.

California Energy Commission, Rosenfield Hearing Room, 1516 9th Street, Sacramento  
(This hearing will be webcast.)

**Los Angeles**

March 14, 2018

1:30 p.m.-4:30 p.m.

California Science Center, Annenberg Building, Muses Room, 700 Exposition Park Dr.,  
Los Angeles

Proposed changes to the CEQA guidelines address nearly every step in the environmental review process to improve efficiency and better protect natural resources. The regulations align CEQA rules with other state environmental policies and goals, including reductions in greenhouse gas emissions.

Examples of proposed changes include:

- Updated exemptions for residential and mixed-use developments near transit and redeveloping vacant buildings.

- Clarified rules to make it easier to use existing environmental documents to cover later projects.
- New provisions to address energy efficiency and the availability of water supplies.
- Simplified requirements for responding to comments.
- Modified provisions to reflect recent CEQA cases addressing baseline, mitigation requirements and greenhouse gas emissions.

The changes include provisions implementing SB 743 (Steinberg) of 2013 that would simplify CEQA analysis of a project's transportation impacts by focusing analysis on "vehicle miles traveled" (VMT). VMT already is used in CEQA to study other impacts such as air quality, greenhouse gas emissions and energy use, and this change provides consistency with those rules. The new rules make it clear that projects that reduce the number of miles that cars travel – such as new bike lanes or new public transportation infrastructure – generally have few environmental impacts and can be expedited under state law.

While cities already are updating their own CEQA procedures for transportation analysis in anticipation of this change, public agencies that need time will have two years to prepare for the transition. The proposal also provides flexibility for agencies to use other metrics to measure the effects of roadway capacity projects.

These proposed changes to the CEQA Guidelines were developed over the past four years with extensive input from the public, stakeholders and legal experts.

Following the public hearings, the Natural Resources Agency will consider all comments on the proposal and may make appropriate changes. At the end of the rulemaking process, including developing written responses to comments, the Natural Resources Agency will submit the package to the Office of Administrative Law. More on the proposed update to the CEQA Guidelines is available [here](#).

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