

**CHAPTER 4  
OTHER ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS**



## 4.0 OTHER ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS

This chapter presents discussions of cumulative effects, growth inducement and the "environmentally superior alternative." These topics are required by sections 15126 and 15130 of the State Guidelines for implementing the California Environmental Quality Act.

### 4.1 CUMULATIVE EFFECTS

As is noted in Chapter 2, a number of projects have been identified as being related to the Metro Green Line Easterly Extension. Briefly, these include the Metro Green Line itself, other rail transit projects under the jurisdiction of the LACTC, Metrolink commuter rail projects, the Orange County Urban Rail project, high occupancy vehicle projects, and the Norwalk Transportation Center. The following sections describe the anticipated effects which would occur if the proposed project were to be implemented along with these related projects.

#### 4.1.1 Topography, Geology and Soils

Exposure to potentially adverse effects associated with liquefaction and ground shaking from earthquakes would be expanded in proportion to the amount of new public transit facilities being constructed. The Metro Green Line Easterly Extension would add incrementally to this exposure. The same would be true for encountering sites suspected of containing hazardous materials, although these would be mitigated as a result of the project. These effects would be potentially significant on an individual basis. On a cumulative basis the effects would not be significant unless a clearly major earthquake were to occur, and even then the affects may not be significant.

#### 4.1.2 Hydrology and Water Quality

Excessive surface runoff and erosion of soil surfaces could occur during construction of individual projects, including the proposed project. This would not be significant and it would not be increased in magnitude on a cumulative basis. Groundwater could be encountered during construction of individual projects and contamination of groundwater could also occur. This effect would not be significant either on an individual project or cumulative basis.

#### 4.1.3 Vegetation and Wildlife

With the exception of landscaping and urban vegetation, it is not anticipated that vegetation or wildlife species of concern would be affected on an individual or cumulative basis. The effects, where they would occur, would not be significant.

#### 4.1.4 Land Use

Each of the related projects has the potential for requiring property acquisitions for right-of-way purposes. The proposed project would add incrementally to this. The significance of potential acquisitions could be significant on an individual project basis, and also potentially significant on a cumulative basis.

Once completed, each of the related projects and the proposed project would be located in areas that range in land use type from commercial and industrial to residential. In some locations there would be areas of incompatibility between these facilities and the surrounding land uses, resulting from above grade facilities that are out of scale with the surrounding environment, from automobile and other public transit traffic associated with the new transit facilities, or other reasons. The nature of these effects pertain to the individual project being considered and the nature of the surrounding land uses. To the extent that land use incompatibilities would occur, they would be increased incrementally by each related project.

The Metro Green Line Easterly Extension project would have a station located at the site of the proposed Norwalk Transportation Center (NTC). This site is also designated as a transfer point for commuter rail service originating from Orange County and points south. The proposed project would be consistent with the land use arrangement and fundamental purpose of both the NTC and the facilities that would use it. Moreover, the proposed project, by providing a connecting link with other Metro lines to the north and west, would contribute to the viability of the NTC, both as a transit center and as a future location for related commercial development. The proposed project thus is judged to have a beneficial cumulative effect on the NTC.

#### **4.1.5 Population and Housing**

The Metro Green Line Easterly Extension station at the Norwalk Transportation Center, commuter rail service from Orange County, other Metro Lines connecting with the Easterly Extension, and the I-105 freeway together could encourage population and housing growth in the vicinity of the proposed project. It is not likely that the proposed project on its own would have this effect, and it is also not likely that the magnitude of the cumulative effect would be substantial. Perhaps a greater potential for increased population and housing would be associated with future commercial development of the NTC site.

If the construction staging area at the west end of the project corridor is used, once construction of the project is complete there would be land available for development. If that occurs, and if the development were to be of higher density than detached single-family homes, increased housing would result, although the amount would be consistent with SCAG regional housing needs projections.

#### **4.1.6 Public Services**

Some related projects could have adverse effects on some public services such as schools, libraries and health care facilities, in the form of increased noise and, perhaps, localized traffic increases associated with transit stations; however, on balance, the network of improved transit that would result should have a cumulative beneficial effect on public services. The source of the expected benefits would be improved accessibility and reductions in traffic resulting from increased use of transit.

#### **4.1.7 Utilities**

Utilities of various kinds would have to be relocated in order to construct each of the related projects. The proposed project would add incrementally to this requirement, and the extent of both the individual and cumulative effects would not be significant.

#### **4.1.8 Aesthetics**

The proposed and related projects would collectively produce a visual presence of public transit and rail facilities that has not previously existed in the greater Los Angeles area. Some of the facilities in the network would use overhead catenary for power collection, primarily the light rail component of the system. Also, some lines would be constructed above grade on aerial guideway structures. One of the alternatives being considered for the proposed project would have such a guideway. While some people would not regard the presence of the above grade structures and overhead wires as unattractive visual elements, others would. An overall judgement as to this effect cannot be made because it involves subjective opinion.

The proposed project in the context of the Norwalk Transportation Center would help define the site as a focal point of public transportation services and facilities.

#### **4.1.9 Cultural Resources**

Both archaeological and historic resources are subject to adverse effects from the proposed project and related projects. The cumulative effects could include acquisition, increased noise exposure, visual encroachment, and other effects. The proposed project would add incrementally to this, insofar as it would affect (aerial alignment only) the Paddison Ranch National Register property. Community concern regarding adverse effects to cultural resources typically would ensure that all planning had been done to minimize the harm that would otherwise occur. It is therefore likely that appropriate mitigation would be incorporated in most instances. However, it is probable that some resources would be adversely affected for which adequate mitigation is not available.

#### **4.1.10 Transportation and Circulation**

Implementation of the proposed project and related projects would result in a comprehensive network of public transportation facilities, offering access to destinations throughout Southern California. The facilities located at the Norwalk Transportation Center would be an important part of this network. Completion of the proposed project in the context of other related public transit projects would produce a beneficial effect with regard to regional mobility and transit patronage.

As a result of the integrated transportation network, other beneficial effects would also be expected. Among these would be reduced automobile travel, reduced energy consumption, and reduced air pollution.

#### **4.1.11 Noise and Vibration**

Implementation of regional transit facilities could expose some areas to increased noise and, potentially, vibration. With regard to vibration, sufficient mitigation measures are generally available to reduce these effects in all but a few instances to a level of insignificance.

Insofar as noise is concerned, there may be some locations which would experience increased noise as a result of an at-grade or above-grade transit line being in proximity to a sensitive use. It may not be possible to completely mitigate the increase at some locations, although the

number of locations subject to this effect should not be significant. The proposed project would not result in significant adverse noise effects and therefore would not contribute to an adverse effect on a cumulative basis.

#### **4.1.12 Air Quality**

As was noted in section 4.1.10 above, the cumulative effect of implementation of the proposed project and related projects is judged to be beneficial. The regional transportation network should produce decreases in automobile travel that would translate into decreased emissions of all criteria pollutants.

#### **4.1.13 Energy**

Also as noted in section 4.1.0 above, implementation of the proposed project and related projects should result in decreased fuel consumption associated with automobile use.

### **4.2 UNAVOIDABLE ADVERSE EFFECTS**

Despite the use of mitigation measures that are proposed as part of the project, there would occur certain impacts which would remain adverse, and which would be of sufficient severity that they would require overriding considerations to be adopted by the LACTC when the project is approved. These effects, referred to as "unavoidable adverse effects," are discussed in this section.

#### **4.2.1 Land Use Compatibility**

The aerial alignment alternative would result in the placement of an aerial guideway structure, support columns and bents, which in some locations would be incompatible with the surroundings. Most of the length of the alignment is commercial in nature and therefore would generally not be considered subject to this concern regarding incompatibility. However, there are residential areas, primarily on the west end of the alignment, which would be in proximity to the guideway. This is considered an unavoidable adverse effect for the aerial alignment.

#### **4.2.2 Aesthetics**

As discussed in the section above, the aerial alignment alternative would be constructed with an overhead guideway supported on single columns or bents throughout the alignment along Imperial Highway. Some people may find this installation attractive, some may have no opinion, and some may find it unattractive. Since individual perception plays an important role in judging the aesthetic effect of the project, it is difficult to make a universal finding in this regard. However, the overhead guideway and support structures would clearly constitute a new visual element in the typical one- and two-story building environment in the City of Norwalk. Moreover, the aerial guideway would be almost 70 feet above grade in order to clear the proposed I-5 HOV facility. Given this height, and the fact that the proposed guideway would be a prominent new visual element, an unavoidable adverse effect determination is made.

#### **4.2.3 Cultural Resources**

The Paddison Ranch property, located at 11951 Imperial Highway, is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The aerial alignment alternative would result in two effects on this property. First, it would require the acquisition of an 8-foot wide strip across the property's frontage for purposes of roadway widening associated with the project. Second, it would place an aerial guideway in proximity to the property. These effects would be considered unavoidable adverse if the aerial alignment were to be selected for implementation.

#### **4.2.4 Property Acquisition**

Both the aerial and subway alignments would require the acquisition of private property. In the case of the aerial alignment, acquisition would include property at the west end of the alignment and portions of property frontage along Imperial Highway, the latter being necessary for roadway widening. Also, small areas would be needed along the alignment for placement of guideway support columns and bents.

The subway alignment would require property for use as a construction staging area. The west end of the alignment has been initially identified as a likely location for this, however, the east end of the alignment may also be a potential site for this activity, in which case, the amount of private property to be acquired would be far less. Once construction has been completed, the area used for construction staging purposes could be reused.

Both alternatives would involve joint use of a parcel of land, located at the east end of the alignment, that is currently occupied by the City of Norwalk Maintenance Yard and designated for future development as the Norwalk Transportation Center. This is a publicly-held parcel of land.

Property owners would be compensated and assisted in finding a suitable place for relocation, and therefore for purposes of residual impact determination, the effects are considered not significant. However, since property acquisition does result in displacement of persons and families, and since in the case of the aerial alignment it would also result in the displacement of a church, for purposes of this section it is characterized as an unavoidable adverse effect that would not occur if the project were not implemented.

#### **4.3 GROWTH INDUCEMENT**

The proposed project would not of itself foster economic or population growth; however, it would be part of a larger public transportation system that could have such effects. It is also related to the development of the Norwalk Transportation Center, which could have implications for economic growth within Norwalk. A discussion of these cumulative effects can be found in section 4.1.

#### **4.4 ENVIRONMENTALLY SUPERIOR ALTERNATIVE**

Implementation of either project alignment alternative would produce beneficial effects regarding regional accessibility, reduced use of the automobile and related improvements in air quality and

energy consumption. Therefore either alignment alternative would be considered superior to the No Build alternative.

Between the aerial and subway alignment alternatives, the subway alignment would avoid potential land use incompatibilities which could occur under the aerial alignment. The subway alignment would avoid interference with a major water line owned by the Metropolitan Water District which would have to be relocated under the aerial alignment. The subway alignment would avoid potentially adverse visual effects that would occur under the aerial alignment. The subway alignment would also avoid property acquisition and visual encroachment onto the Paddison Ranch National Register property. The subway alignment would not require the widening of Imperial Highway that would be required under the aerial alignment.

For the reasons stated above, the subway alignment is judged to be the "environmentally superior alternative," pursuant to section 15126 of the State CEQA Guidelines.