

4.20 Irreversible and Irretrievable Commitments of Resources

CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.2(c) requires a discussion of any significant irreversible environmental changes that would be caused by a proposed project should it be implemented. Generally, a project would result in significant irreversible environmental changes if any of the following would occur:

- The project would involve a large commitment of nonrenewable resources
- The proposed consumption of resources is not justified (e.g., the project involves wasteful energy use)
- The primary and secondary impacts would generally commit future generations to similar uses
- The project involves uses in which irreversible damage could result from any potential environmental accidents associated with the project, including risks during construction of utilities, the storm drain relocation, and irreversible damage from potential environmental impacts, construction accidents, and heightened pedestrian crossing.

Under the No Build Alternative, no new infrastructure would be built within the Study Area, aside from projects currently under construction or projects funded for construction, environmentally cleared, planned to be in operation by 2040, as identified in the Metro Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP).

The TSM Alternative does not have a substantial construction component and would not have an irreversible and irretrievable commitment of nonrenewable resources associated with construction. Operating enhanced bus services under the TSM Alternative would rely upon the use of nonrenewable resources or a commitment of physical resources, such as metal, to the expanded bus fleet. Operation of the TSM Alternative would increase energy consumption due to the maintenance and operations of the expanded bus fleet. The use of fossil fuel would be necessary to provide electricity and fuel for buses, worker vehicles, and maintenance operations.

Construction of the Build Alternatives would entail the one-time irreversible and irretrievable commitment of nonrenewable resources, such as energy (fossil fuels used for construction equipment) and construction materials (such as lumber, sand, gravel, metals, and water). Additionally, labor and natural resources are used to produce construction materials. These materials are generally not retrievable. However, they are not in short supply and their use would not have an adverse effect upon continued availability of these resources. Any construction would also require a substantial onetime expenditure of both local and Federal funds, which are not retrievable. Land used to construct the proposed facilities is considered an irreversible commitment during the period the land is used. After construction is completed, land used for construction staging would be available for other uses. The project would commit land at stations and the maintenance facility to transit use. Station portals, maintenance facilities, and aboveground elements would be located on sites with existing commercial, retail, and industrial uses and would not require a substantial land commitment. This commitment of long-term land resources is consistent with the policies of the County of Los Angeles and the Cities of Los Angeles and San Fernando to promote transit-oriented uses.

The consumption of nonrenewable resources related to the Build Alternatives includes water, petroleum products, and electricity. Tunneling activities would require water for slurry for the tunnel boring machine and in-water cooling towers. While much of this water can be recycled and reused, these processes would also create wastewater that would require disposal. In addition, fossil fuels would be

used for transporting workers and materials during construction, and electricity and fuel would be used for trains, stations, and worker vehicles for maintenance and operation during the life of the project. The consumption amount and rate of these resources would not result in significant environmental impacts or the unnecessary, inefficient, or wasteful use of such resources, because they would increase transit use (which increases energy efficiency) and decrease automobile dependence (which uses fossil fuels).

Benefits from the East San Fernando Valley Transit Corridor would include improved mobility, transit accessibility, and energy and time savings. The resources commitment and consumption for the Build Alternatives are considered appropriate because regional and local area residents and visitors would benefit from improved transit services, which, in turn, would result in an overall decrease in the irreversible and irretrievable commitment of nonrenewable resources. For example, transportation sources account for over 40 percent of the energy consumed in California. The project is expected to remove passenger cars from the regional roadway network, easing the increase in VMT and the usage of fossil fuels. The Build Alternatives would reduce regional VMT by 33 to 44 thousand miles and reduce mobile source energy consumption up to nearly 427 billion BTUs. Therefore, the project can substantially decrease the irreversible and irretrievable commitment of resources.

The project consists of an either Bus Rapid, Low-Floor LRT/Tram, or LRT transit system that would include transit stations, a maintenance facility, and a rail operations center. These components of the project would primarily use household-type cleaning materials, such as detergents and cleansers. Oil, solvents, and other materials would be used for train maintenance in relatively small volumes and are not considered acutely hazardous materials according to the National Institute of Health. There is the potential for hazardous materials/waste spills to occur; however, the storage and disposal of hazardous materials/waste will be conducted in accordance with all Federal and State requirements in order to prevent or manage hazards. In the unlikely event that a spill does occur, remediation would be conducted accordingly. Therefore, there would be minimal risk of irreversible damage caused by an environmental accident associated with hazardous or acutely hazardous materials.