

15.1 Affected Environment

This section provides an overview of relevant transportation regulations and the existing transportation systems in the Plan Area.

15.1.1 Regulatory Setting

Federal

No directly relevant federal regulations have been identified.

State

Caltrans Route Concept Reports

Caltrans has completed transportation or route concept reports for State Route (SR) 32, 70, 99, 149, 162, and 191. These reports identify long-range improvements and establish the *concept*, or desired, level of service (LOS) for specific corridor segments. These reports identify long-range improvements needed to bring an existing facility up to standards anticipated to adequately serve 20-year traffic forecasts. Additionally, the reports identify the ultimate design concept for conditions beyond the immediate 20-year design period. An overview of each route concept report is provided in pages 4.13-3 through 4.13-6 of the County general plan EIR (Butte County 2010); these overviews are hereby incorporated by reference.

Local

Butte County Association of Governments

Metropolitan Transportation Plan

BCAG adopted the MTP for Butte County in December 2012 (Butte County Association of Governments 2012). The MTP specifies the policies, projects, and programs necessary to maintain, manage, and improve the region's transportation system. The Butte County 2012 MTP covers the 23-year period between 2012 and 2035, and it is required to be updated every 4 years. The MTP includes an Air Quality Conformity Analysis and Determination, as well as a Program EIR. The MTP provides a comprehensive long-range view of transportation needs and opportunities for the county. It establishes goals and objectives for the future system. BCAG transportation projects within and outside the UPAs were included in the MTP and the EIR that evaluates the environmental impacts of the MTP. In addition, Caltrans projects outside the UPAs related to SR 70 capacity improvements and SR 99 capacity improvements are identified in Chapter 6, *Highways and Local Streets and Roads*, of the MTP. The funded SR 70 capacity improvement projects include construction of passing lanes from Ophir Road to Palermo Road, from Palermo Road to East Gridley Road, and from East Gridley Road to the Yuba County line in the next 23 years. The funded SR 99

capacity improvement projects include construction of auxiliary lanes, Eaton Road/SR 99 interchange improvements, SR 99/East Avenue interchange improvements, and SR 99/Southgate interchange improvement in Chico by 2035. The unfunded improvements on SR 70 and SR 99 include SR 99 corridor projects, SR 99 passing lane projects between Gridley and the junction at SR 149, SR 99–Neal Road interchange improvements, SR 70–Ophir Road interchange improvements, and SR 70–Georgia Pacific interchange improvements.

Regional Transportation Improvement Program

As the designated Regional Transportation Planning Agency (RTPA) serving the incorporated cities of Biggs, Chico, Gridley, Oroville; the town of Paradise; and the county, BCAG is charged with the responsibility of preparing the RTIP.

The 2014 RTIP (Butte County Association of Governments 2013) covers the 5 fiscal years from 2014/15 through 2018/19. The purpose of the RTIP is to identify project recommendations for the Regional Improvement Program (RIP) funds made available to BCAG as provided by the State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) process. The RTIP project recommendations are then subject to approval by the California Transportation Commission for inclusion into the STIP.

SR 70 passing lane projects from Ophir Road to Palermo Road and from Palermo Road to East Gridley Road are included in the 2014 RTIP.

Coordinated Public Transit and Human Services Transportation Plan

BCAG produced a Coordinated Public Transit–Human Services Transportation Plan for Butte County in 2008. This plan identifies existing public transit services in the county, unmet transit needs, and recommendations for providing future services. The plan specifically identifies and prioritizes projects eligible for federal funding to address transportation needs of persons of low income, persons with disabilities, and seniors.

Butte County

General Plan

The Circulation Element of the County’s General Plan 2030 (Butte County 2012) is concerned with the safe and efficient movement of people and goods in and around the county. To ensure that the county’s transportation system can accommodate growth anticipated during the 20-year planning period, the Circulation Element works closely with the Land Use Element. The Circulation Element sets forth goals and policies describing the overall mobility program for the county. The following policies regarding transportation and circulation are applicable to the Plan Area.

- Regional land use and transportation planning (policies 1.1 through 1.3, 3.4, 3.5, 3.7, 3.8, 7.1 through 7.3, 8.1 through 8.3, 9.1, 11.1, and 11.2).
- Provisions for bicycles and pedestrians (policies 3.1 through 3.3, 3.6, 5.1 through 5.5, 9.2, 10.1, and 10.2).
- Level of service standards (LOS C for County roadways and concept LOS for Caltrans facilities) and mitigation of traffic impacts (policies 6.1 through 6.6).

Bicycle Plan

The purpose of the *Butte County Bicycle Plan* (Butte County 2011) is to encourage use of bicycling as a sensible, non-polluting, healthy, and affordable mode of transportation and recreation in the unincorporated County areas through the provision of feasible improvements that promote interconnectivity between similar facilities in local communities, parks, and other recreational areas within the county.

The plan provides maps showing planned future bikeway facilities in the unincorporated County areas, as well as connectivity to existing and proposed bikeway facilities within the municipal jurisdictions.

Incorporated Municipalities

The Plan area includes four incorporated municipalities: Biggs, Chico, Gridley, and Oroville. The roadway capacity level of service policies adopted by each of these jurisdictions guides what is considered to be acceptable operations on local roadways in their jurisdictional boundaries and respective SOIs.

City of Biggs General Plan

The Circulation Element (City of Biggs 2014a) describes the full range of transportation systems in the City of Biggs and its planning area. The goals, policies, and actions established in the element guide development of the City's circulation system, including roadways and transit, bicycle, and pedestrian facilities and services. The following policies regarding transportation and circulation are applicable to the Plan Area.

- Regional land use and transportation planning (policies 1.1 through 1.4, 1.9, 2.2, and 4.3).
- Provisions for bicycles and pedestrians (policies 4.1, 4.2, and 4.4).
- Level of service standards (LOS C on all City roadways and intersections and D or better during peak travel times) and mitigation of traffic impacts (policies 1.3, 1.5, 1.6, and 2.1).

City of Chico General Plan

The Circulation Element (City of Chico 2011a) establishes a multimodal transportation network that accommodates vehicles, transit, bicycles, and pedestrians. This network is intended to enhance mobility for the entire community. The following regarding transportation and circulation are applicable to the Plan Area.

- Regional land use and transportation planning (policies 1.1, 1.8, 2.1, and 2.2).
- Provisions for bicycles and pedestrians (policies 3.3 through 3.5, 4.2, and 4.3).
- Level of service standards (LOS D for most roadways and intersections at the peak PM period and concept LOS for Caltrans facilities) and mitigation of traffic impacts (policies 1.2 through 1.4).

City of Gridley General Plan

The Circulation Element (City of Gridley 2010) addresses the movement of people, goods, resources, and services in the Gridley planning area. The following policies regarding transportation and circulation are applicable to the Plan Area.

- Regional land use and transportation planning (policies 4.1 through 4.3, 5.10 through 5.13).
- Provisions for bicycles and pedestrians (policies 2.3 through 2.5, 4.4, and 5.7).
- Level of service standards (LOS D for city roadways and intersections and concept LOS for Caltrans facilities) and mitigation of traffic impacts (policies 1.5, 1.8 through 1.9).

City of Oroville General Plan

The Circulation Element (City of Oroville 2009a) accounts for the critical link between land use patterns and transportation. It has been developed in close correlation with the Land Use Element to ensure that the circulation system will be adequate to serve Oroville's existing and future land uses. The following policies regarding transportation and circulation are applicable to the Plan Area.

- Regional land use and transportation planning (policies 1.1 through 1.6, 2.2, 2.3, 6.10 and 7.7).
- Provisions for bicycles and pedestrians (policies 6.1, 6.2, 6.4, 6.8, and 7.1).
- Level of service standards (LOS D for most city roadways and intersections and concept LOS for Caltrans facilities) and mitigation of traffic impacts (policies 2.1 and 3.4).

15.1.2 Environmental Setting

This section provides an overview of the existing transportation system in the Plan Area, comprising roadways, nonmotorized (pedestrian and bicycle) facilities, public transit services, and airports. The circulation elements of the Local Agencies' general plans provide detailed descriptions of existing transportation conditions and planned transportation improvements and are incorporated by reference in the sections detailed below.

Roadway System

Existing Roadway System

The County is not served regionally by an interstate freeway. State highways in the county are operated by Caltrans and are conventional highways, with the exception of several segments of SR 70 and SR 99 in the Chico and Oroville areas that are designated as freeways.

The Plan Area is served by four major highways. SR 99 travels north-south, connecting the county with Yuba City and Sacramento to the south and Red Bluff to the northwest. SR 70 splits from SR 99 south of Marysville, runs north to Oroville, and continues northeast toward Quincy. SR 149 connects SR 99 and SR 70 and provides a connection between Chico and Oroville. SR 162 is a mainly east-west highway that connects southern Butte County, including Oroville, with Interstate 5 (I-5) in Glenn County. Figure 1-1 shows the major state routes in the Plan Area.

Existing Traffic Conditions

Traffic operating conditions on major roadway facilities in the county were evaluated on pages 4.13-1 through 4.13-23 of the County general plan EIR (Butte County 2010). Facilities were selected for analysis either because they were believed to carry relatively high volumes or because they provide an important connection to populated areas or major county resources. The traffic operations are described in terms of LOS, a scale used to determine the operating quality of a roadway segment or intersection based on volume-to-capacity (V/C) ratio or average delay experienced by vehicles on

the facility. The levels range from A to F, with LOS A representing free traffic flow and LOS F representing severe traffic congestion.

The LOS was calculated for key roadway segments to evaluate the quality of traffic conditions on the major roadway facilities in the county. Table 4.13-4 of the County general plan EIR summarizes the existing LOS on the key roadway segments as well as the jurisdictions establishing the LOS policy for the facilities. The following major roadway segments in the Plan Area were found to operate unacceptably during the PM peak hour in 2006 based on the LOS standard established by the applicable state, county, or incorporated municipal jurisdiction.

- SR 32 between East Avenue and West 1st Street (in Chico)—LOS F.
- SR 70 from Montgomery Avenue to Grand Avenue (in Oroville)—LOS E.
- SR 162 from Olive Highway to Lower Wyandotte Road (in Oroville)—LOS F.
- The Skyway from SR 99 to Notre Dame Boulevard (in Chico)—LOS F.

Bicycle and Pedestrian Facilities

The bicycle and pedestrian transportation system in the Plan Area consists of local and regional bikeways and trails; these facilities are defined below.

- Class I bike paths are designated for exclusive use by both bicyclists and pedestrians, and are separated from, but often adjacent to, roadways.
- Class II bike lanes usually consist of one-way lanes adjacent to the traffic lane on either side of the roadway, separated from the motor vehicle lane by a painted white stripe and designated with signs and permanent pavement markings. These facilities are intended for the exclusive use of bicyclists. However, in rural areas, bike lanes are located on the roadway shoulder, which is also utilized by pedestrians.
- Class III bike routes may be located on roadway facilities with sufficient width for shared motor vehicle and bicycle use and are usually only designated by signs indicating the route and shared use.

In the Chico urban area, the County currently has an existing Class I bike path on the eastern side of the Midway extending from the Chico city limits on East Park Ave south to Jones Avenue. Within the Chico urban area, there are also existing Class I bike paths, Class II bike lanes and Class III bike routes that connect facilities within Chico city limits and continue into the County's jurisdiction.

In the greater Oroville area, County bicycle facilities include a Class I bike path adjacent to Palermo Road from Lincoln Boulevard to Palermo-Honcut Highway and a Class II bike lane on Lincoln Boulevard from Oroville city limits south to Monte Vista Avenue. Within the Oroville urban area, there are also existing Class I bike paths, Class II bike lanes, and Class III bike routes that connect facilities within Oroville city limits and continue into the County's jurisdiction.

In the Durham area south of Chico, a Class II bike lane facility runs along Durham-Pentz Highway from the Midway east to Lott Road. In the other portions of the county, existing urban bikeway facilities typically fall under the jurisdiction of the Cities of Biggs and Gridley or the Town of Paradise.

The *Butte County Bicycle Plan* (Butte County 2011) identifies planned future bikeway facilities in unincorporated county areas. The bikeway facilities in the unincorporated areas of the county are

typically planned to interface with facilities planned by the local jurisdictions. The proposed bikeway system was designed to provide the most practical routes and facilities, where possible, along with already identifiable recreational routes frequented by more avid bicyclists in the county.

Public Transit Service

Public transit services in the Plan Area consist of public buses, paratransit, private motorcoach operators, and passenger rail service. Butte Regional Transit (B-Line) is administered by BCAG and provides fixed route bus and paratransit services to Chico, Oroville, Paradise, Gridley, Biggs, and the unincorporated county. Additional public bus services include Glenn Ride, which provides services from Chico to Glenn County, and Plumas Transit, which provides weekly service between Chico and Quincy. For seniors and disabled individuals, there are also a number of service providers and social service agencies that provide door-to-door service. Greyhound Lines provides the scheduled motorcoach service to and from the Butte County area.

Intercity passenger rail service is provided by Amtrak. Amtrak operates the Coast Starlight train originating in Seattle with major stops in Portland, Eugene, Sacramento, and Oakland and terminating in Los Angeles. Trains operate daily through the Chico Amtrak station.

Airport

Air transportation in the county is accommodated by a number of private and public airfields and heliports serving general aviation and agricultural users. Most of these are small fields for private use. Commercial flights to distant or out-of state destinations are available at Sacramento International Airport, about 60 miles south of Oroville.

The major aviation facilities in the Plan Area are the Chico Municipal Airport, the Oroville Municipal Airport, and the Rancharo Airport. The Chico Municipal Airport is the county's largest airport, serving one commercial airline as well as private and public agency aviation. The Oroville Municipal Airport is the second largest airport, serving the south county areas. The Rancharo Airport is privately owned and operated.

15.2 Environmental Consequences

This section incorporates by reference the impact determinations presented for transportation in the Local Agencies' general plan EIRs (as described in more detail in Chapter 3, Section 3.3, *Resource Chapter Organization and NEPA/CEQA Requirements*).¹ The significance findings and mitigation measures of each of the general plan EIRs are compiled in Appendix C. The Lead Agencies have reviewed these analyses and found them to be appropriate for the purposes of this EIS/EIR.

15.2.1 Methods for Impact Analysis

Transportation impacts are usually evaluated in terms of temporary impacts (i.e., during construction) and permanent impacts (i.e., changes in traffic as a result of land use changes).

¹ These previous CEQA documents are available collectively for public review at the BCAG offices (2580 Sierra Sunrise Terrace, Suite 100 Chico, CA 95928-8441). Individual general plans and EIRs are also available at each of the respective land use agencies.

Potential impacts were assessed by reviewing the local standards and general plans, and by contacting local agencies.

The BRCP would not provide individual project approvals or entitlements for any private or public development or infrastructure projects. Accordingly, this EIS/EIR does not provide CEQA or NEPA coverage for individual covered activities and does not function as a *programmatic* or *umbrella* CEQA or NEPA document for regional development and infrastructure projects. The BRCP EIS/EIR evaluates only the adverse and beneficial environmental effects associated with the decisions of the Local Agencies, water and irrigation districts, and Caltrans to approve, permit, and implement the BRCP. Accordingly, the methods for analyzing direct impacts on transportation are tailored to evaluate the decisions of the Local Agencies, water and irrigation districts, and Caltrans to approve, permit, and implement the BRCP. This EIS/EIR also incorporates the impact determinations of the Local Agencies' general plan EIRs to analyze indirect impacts on transportation.

It is assumed that all covered activities approved by the Local Agencies would be consistent with the policies of their respective general plans and would be subject to any mitigation measures identified such that impacts would be adequately mitigated to the extent identified in the general plan EIRs. Water and irrigation district activities have not been analyzed in previous CEQA documents. These activities include: rerouting of existing canals, replacement of water delivery structures, replacement of large weirs, mowing and trimming vegetation along service roads, and removing aquatic vegetation from canals. Potential impacts on transportation could occur primarily during construction or maintenance of these activities.

The methodology for evaluating impacts on traffic and transportation resources also incorporates standard best management practices (BMPs) required by Caltrans during construction of transportation projects and summarized in Appendix D. The analysis assumes that Caltrans would incorporate these BMPs where appropriate on transportation projects within the Plan Area.

15.2.2 Significance Criteria

In accordance with Appendix G of the State CEQA Guidelines, the action alternatives would be considered to have a significant effect if they would result in any of the conditions listed below.

- A substantial increase in traffic compared to existing traffic volumes and the capacity of the roadway system.
- Safety hazards due to design features, incompatible uses (e.g., hazards to vehicular, pedestrian, and bicycle transit), or inadequate emergency access.
- Conflict with adopted transportation plans, programs, or projects.

15.2.3 Impacts and Mitigation Measures

Alternative 1—No Action (No Plan Implementation)

As discussed in Chapter 2, Section 2.3.1, *Alternative 1—No Action (No Plan Implementation)*, under Alternative 1, project proponents would apply for permits on a project-by-project basis, without a coordinated and comprehensive effort to minimize and mitigate biological impacts through the BRCP. Under the Alternative 1, urban development and public infrastructure projects would continue to occur pursuant to the approved general plans of the Local Agencies and BCAG's regional plan(s). No regional conservation strategy or conservation measures would be implemented;

therefore, benefits to and impacts on transportation associated with the conservation strategy and conservation measures would not occur.

However, activities such as land development and associated infrastructure development, operation, and maintenance as established in the Local Agencies' general plans would introduce new vehicles onto the regional and local roadway system. Impacts on the regional and local transportation system have been anticipated as part of regional transportation planning efforts, which take into account population growth consistent with local general plans. Impacts on local roadways from individual development projects would be addressed by local studies (e.g., CEQA review). Regional projects developed by BCAG and the Local Agencies are expected to implement mitigation for these traffic impacts. Mitigation to reduce traffic impacts will also be implemented in association with local projects implemented by developers—either by the developers or by the municipalities using development impact fees.

Because Alternative 1 would incorporate the land developments and infrastructure projects adopted in the local general plans and transportation plans (including the 2012 MTP and the 2014 RTIP), the impacts of this alternative on transportation and circulation are those that have been evaluated in the general plan EIRs of the various jurisdictions in the Plan Area.

Impact TRA-1: A substantial increase in traffic compared to existing traffic volumes and the capacity of the roadway system (NEPA: significant and unavoidable; CEQA: significant and unavoidable)

The Local Agencies' general plan EIRs concluded that land development through implementation of the general plans would result in a substantial increase in traffic volumes on regional and local roadways, resulting in exceedance of the capacity of the existing roadway system. The County (Butte County 2010) determined that implementation of the County General Plan 2030 would result in traffic operation impacts on major roadway facilities that would remain significant after implementation of plan policies and the adoption of identified mitigation measures. The City of Chico (2011b) determined that implementation of its general plan would result in significant and unavoidable impacts on state facilities within the city limits; no additional mitigation measures are identified in the EIR. The City of Gridley (2009) determined that implementation of its general plan would result in traffic operation impacts on local and state facilities that would remain significant after implementation of plan policies and the adoption of identified mitigation measures. The City of Oroville (2009b) determined that implementation of its general plan would result in significant and unavoidable impacts on state facilities within the city limits; no additional mitigation measures are identified in the EIR. The City of Biggs (2014b) determined that implementation of its general plan would result in significant and unavoidable traffic operation impacts on local and state facilities and that no mitigation would reduce this impact (City of Biggs 2014b). The construction of state road projects within these jurisdictions would need to comply with Caltrans requirements and BMPs summarized in Appendix D; however, compliance would not likely reduce the significant and unavoidable impacts associated with the implementation of the general plans because the substantial increase in traffic is associated with the expected land development and population increase.

Short-term traffic impacts could result from construction-related activities associated with water and irrigation district construction and recurring maintenance. Such activities would likely include grading and fill operations and construction of drainage infrastructure, requiring the movement of heavy equipment on roadways during limited construction periods. The number of vehicle trips

generated by these activities is expected to entail traffic volumes similar to those associated with current maintenance activities. Furthermore, construction projects would be located in areas with little traffic. Consequently, they would not result in a significant increase in traffic. Long-term traffic impacts associated with water and irrigation district activities could result from monitoring and recurring maintenance and is anticipated to use existing employees of the water and irrigation districts and thus not result in a substantial increase in traffic.

NEPA Determination: Alternative 1 would result in a substantial increase in traffic compared to existing traffic volumes and the capacity of the roadway system as a result of implementation of the general plans. Traffic operation impacts on major roadway facilities, traffic operation impacts on local and state facilities, and impacts on state facilities within city limits would remain significant after implementation of plan policies and the adoption of identified mitigation measures in general plan EIRs, where applicable. This impact would be significant and unavoidable.

CEQA Determination: Alternative 1 would result in a substantial increase in traffic compared to existing traffic volumes and the capacity of the roadway system as a result of implementation of the general plans. Traffic operation impacts on major roadway facilities, traffic operation impacts on local and state facilities, and impacts on state facilities within city limits would remain significant after implementation of plan policies and the adoption of identified mitigation measures in general plan EIRs, where applicable. This impact would be significant and unavoidable.

Impact TRA-2: Safety hazards due to design features, incompatible uses (e.g., hazards to vehicular, pedestrian, and bicycle transit), or inadequate emergency access (NEPA: significant and unavoidable; CEQA: significant and unavoidable)

The Local Agencies, except the City of Biggs, determined in their general plan EIRs that land development activities and construction of any associated infrastructure project and transportation projects would not result in significant impacts related to traffic safety hazards or inadequate emergency access. The City of Biggs (2014b) determined that implementation of its general plan would result in significant and unavoidable impacts on traffic hazards and emergency access because funding has not been secured to improve existing roadway design deficiencies, and the City is uncertain as to whether roadway connectivity improvements proposed in the general plan would be implemented simultaneously with future development(City of Biggs 2014b).

The construction of state road projects within these jurisdictions would need to comply with Caltrans requirements and BMPs summarized in Appendix D; compliance would likely reduce the significant and unavoidable impacts associated with the implementation of the general plans because they would maintain the safety of roads during construction and maintain emergency access during construction.

The construction and recurring maintenance activities of the water and irrigation districts would not result in safety hazards or inadequate emergency access as these activities would not be located on the existing roadway system and thus would not result in a change in the existing roadway system or a modification to the existing roadway system such that emergency vehicles could not have access. Furthermore, maintenance of water and irrigation district service roads would actually maintain the existing service roads such that hazards or inadequate emergency access would not occur.

NEPA Determination: Alternative 1 would result in significant impacts related to traffic safety hazards or inadequate emergency access within the city of Biggs. Implementation of policy

provisions in the proposed general plan would reduce the impacts. However, funding has not been secured to improve existing roadway design deficiencies, and it is uncertain as to whether roadway connectivity improvements proposed in the general plan would be implemented simultaneously with future development. Therefore, impacts would remain significant after implementation of plan policies. Because no other feasible mitigation would reduce these impacts, the impacts would be significant and unavoidable.

CEQA Determination: Alternative 1 would result in significant impacts related to traffic safety hazards or inadequate emergency access within the City of Biggs. Implementation of policy provisions in the proposed general plan would reduce the impacts. However, funding has not been secured to improve existing roadway design deficiencies, and it is uncertain as to whether roadway connectivity improvements proposed in the general plan would be implemented simultaneously with future development. Therefore, impacts would remain significant after implementation of plan policies. Because no other feasible mitigation would reduce these impacts, the impacts would be significant and unavoidable.

Impact TRA-3: Potential conflicts with transportation plans, programs, and planned projects (NEPA: no impact; CEQA: no impact)

A number of transportation projects are proposed in the Plan Area, including programmed and future projects in the BCAG's RTP, planned projects in the County/city TIPs and capital improvement plans (CIPs), and local projects that may not be specifically listed. Because Alternative 1 would incorporate the infrastructure and transportation projects adopted in the local general plans and regional transportation plans, this alternative would not conflict with transportation plans, programs, and planned projects developed by the Local Agencies.

NEPA Determination: Alternative 1 would not conflict with transportation plans, programs, and planned projects because it would incorporate the infrastructure and transportation projects adopted in the local general plans and transportation plans. There would be no impact. No mitigation is required.

CEQA Determination: Alternative 1 would not conflict with transportation plans, programs, and planned projects because it would incorporate the infrastructure and transportation projects adopted in the local general plans and transportation plans. There would be no impact. No mitigation is required.

Alternative 2—Proposed Action

Under Alternative 2, covered activities would include the existing, planned, and proposed land uses over which the Permit Applicants have land use authority; state and local transportation projects; maintenance of water delivery systems (e.g., WCWD canals and similar delivery systems); habitat restoration, enhancement, and management actions (conservation measures); and adaptive management and monitoring activities. Most covered activities would require individual permits and approvals pursuant to the Local Agencies' general plans and land use regulations or the requirements of the implementing agency (such as Caltrans and irrigation districts) and would undergo subsequent project-level CEQA review and relevant NEPA review for construction and operation-related impacts; some covered activities, however, may be exempted from this environmental review requirement due to project characteristics, including small projects or infill project.

Impact TRA-1: A substantial increase in traffic compared to existing traffic volumes and the capacity of the roadway system (NEPA: significant and unavoidable; CEQA: significant and unavoidable)

Development associated with implementation of the Local Agencies' general plans, Caltrans projects, and water and irrigation district activities would result in the same effects on traffic volumes as described in Impact TRA-1 under Alternative 1. Therefore, a substantial increase in traffic is expected compared to existing traffic volumes and the capacity of the roadway system.

Implementation of the conservation strategy and conservation measures would not result in a significant increase in traffic over existing conditions. Short-term traffic impacts could result from construction-related activities associated with restoration. Such activities would likely include grading and fill operations and construction of drainage infrastructure, requiring the movement of heavy equipment on roadways during limited construction periods. The number of vehicle trips generated by these activities is expected to entail traffic volumes similar to those associated with current farming and grazing activities. Furthermore, construction projects would generally be small, of limited duration, and located in areas with little traffic. Consequently, they would not result in a significant increase in traffic over existing conditions. Long-term traffic impacts associated with implementation of the conservation strategy and conservation measures could result from public access to individual conservation lands for recreational or educational purposes. Public access to the conservation lands is not expected to result in a significant increase in traffic because such access would be limited to uses compatible with the preservation and enhancement of natural communities—in other words, heavy recreational uses would be disallowed. Long-term traffic impacts associated with conservation measures could also result from normal operations and maintenance activities in the conservation areas and conservation-related facilities and infrastructures. Such activities are expected to include planting trees, seeding grassland areas, removing fences, adding or resizing culverts, transporting livestock, and mowing fuel breaks. Long-term traffic impacts associated with operations and maintenance activities in the conservation areas and conservation-related facilities and infrastructures would be expected to be minimal.

NEPA Determination: The impact determination would be the same as Alternative 1 for development associated with implementation of the Local Agencies' general plans. The conservation strategy would not result in a substantial increase in traffic as short-term and long-term traffic generation is not expected to substantially differ from the No Action alternative. The impact would be significant and unavoidable.

CEQA Determination: The impact determination would be the same as Alternative 1 for development associated with implementation of the Local Agencies' general plans; however, the conservation strategy would not result in a substantial increase in traffic short-term and long-term traffic generation is not expected to substantially differ from the No Action alternative. The impact would be significant and unavoidable.

Impact TRA-2: Safety hazards due to design features, incompatible uses (e.g., hazards to vehicular, pedestrian, and bicycle transit), or inadequate emergency access (NEPA: significant and unavoidable; CEQA: significant and unavoidable)

The impacts associated with implementation of the general plans, Caltrans projects, and water and irrigation district activities are the same as those identified in the discussion of Impact TRA-2 under Alternative 1. The Local Agencies, except the City of Biggs, determined that implementation of their general plans would not result in significant impacts on traffic hazards or emergency access.

However, the City of Biggs determined that significant and unavoidable impacts would result because funding has not been secured for roadway improvements whether planned roadway improvements would coincide with future development is uncertain.

Implementation of the conservation strategy and conservation measures would not result in a significant increase in traffic, as discussed in Impact TRA-1. Construction projects related to the conservation strategy, traffic related to public use of conservation areas, and operation and maintenance activities in the conservation areas and conservation-related facilities and infrastructures would generally be small, of limited duration, and located in areas with little traffic.

NEPA Determination: Like Alternative 1, Alternative 2 would result in significant impacts related to traffic safety hazards or inadequate emergency access within the City of Biggs. Impacts would be reduced but would remain significant after implementation of Biggs general plan policies. The conservation strategy would not result in significant traffic impacts. Because no other feasible mitigation would reduce the impacts identified in the Biggs General Plan EIR, the impacts would be significant and unavoidable.

CEQA Determination: Like Alternative 1, Alternative 2 would result in significant impacts related to traffic safety hazards or inadequate emergency access within the City of Biggs. Impacts would be reduced but would remain significant after implementation of Biggs general plan policies. The conservation strategy would not result in significant traffic impacts. Because no other feasible mitigation would reduce the impacts identified in the Biggs General Plan EIR, the impacts would be significant and unavoidable.

Impact TRA-3: Potential conflicts with transportation plans, programs, and planned projects (NEPA: less than significant with mitigation; CEQA: less than significant with mitigation)

The impacts associated with the proposed transportation projects within the Plan Area and potential conflicts with transportation plans, programs, and planned projects are the same as those disclosed in the discussion of Impact TRA-3 under Alternative 1, and no conflicts are expected. A number of transportation projects are proposed in the Plan Area, including programmed and future projects in the BCAG's RTP, Caltrans District 3 planned improvements, planned projects in the County/city TIPs and CIPs, and local projects that may not be specifically listed. Many of the transportation projects identified would require only minor additional right-of-way or would be conducted within existing rights-of-way; these would have minimal potential to conflict with land acquisition objectives of the conservation strategy. However, some transportation projects are still conceptual and only general information on alignments or construction locations has been developed. The establishment of conservation areas in areas where land may be required for transportation project rights-of-way could impair construction of these transportation projects; similarly, the construction of transportation projects in such areas could limit their suitability as conservation areas. Consequently, this impact associated with the conservation strategy would be considered significant as there could be potential conflicts with transportation plans. However, implementation of Mitigation Measure TRA-3 would reduce this impact to a less-than-significant level.

NEPA Determination: The impact determination would be the same as Alternative 1 for development associated with implementation of the Local Agencies' general plans. The establishment of conservation areas in areas where land may be required for transportation project rights-of-way could impair construction of these transportation projects; similarly, the construction of transportation projects in such areas could limit their suitability as conservation areas.

Consequently, the impact would be significant. Implementation of Mitigation Measure TRA-3 would reduce this impact to a less-than-significant level.

CEQA Determination: The impact determination would be the same as Alternative 1 for development associated with implementation of the Local Agencies' general plans. The establishment of conservation areas in areas where land may be required for transportation project rights-of-way could impair construction of these transportation projects; similarly, the construction of transportation projects in such areas could limit their suitability as resource preserves. Consequently, the impact would be significant. Implementation of Mitigation Measure TRA-3 would reduce this impact to a less-than-significant level.

Mitigation Measure TRA-3: Avoid acquisition of conservation lands that are within or adjacent to proposed alignments of programmed or planned transportation projects

As part of the process of identifying suitable sites for land acquisition under the conservation strategy, the Implementing Entity will avoid lands that are within or adjacent to proposed alignments for the programmed or planned transportation projects identified in BCAG's MTP and RTIP and Caltrans District 3 roadway improvement projects. Lands within or adjacent to the proposed rights-of-way should not be considered for acquisition unless it is determined that, as part of acquisition, adequate avoidance and minimization measures could be developed and implemented to permit construction of the proposed project and avoid conflicts with the goals and objectives of the proposed Plan.

Alternative 3—Reduced Development/Reduced Fill

Alternative 3 is similar to Alternative 2 except that it uses the various general plan EIR reduced development alternatives as described in Chapter 2, *Proposed Action and Alternatives*, to create a single reduced development footprint. Covered activities under this alternative would be similar to those described in the BRCP but would be limited to the reduced development footprint for a reduced permit term of 30 years. The reduced footprint and reduced land conservation would result in fewer built structures and less ground disturbance.

It is anticipated that under Alternative 3, fewer acres of natural communities would be conserved because reduced development would provide reduced funding for the conservation strategy. However, it is anticipated that the conservation measures would be the same because the reduction of fill would be achieved through the reduced development footprint of the Local Agencies' general plans rather than through modification of the conservation measures. Consequently, the impacts related to implementation of the conservation strategy and conservation measures would be the same as under Alternative 2.

Impact TRA-1: A substantial increase in traffic compared to existing traffic volumes and the capacity of the roadway system (NEPA: significant and unavoidable; CEQA: significant and unavoidable)

Development specified in Alternative 3 would result in similar impacts on traffic volumes and roadway capacity as would Alternative 2, but the severity of these impacts would be less because of the reduction in overall development. Nevertheless, because of the increased traffic volumes that would be associated with this alternative, this impact would be significant and unavoidable. The transportation-related effects associated with implementation of the conservation strategy and

conservation measures would be similar to, but slightly less than, those under Alternative 2 because it is anticipated there would be fewer acres preserved.

NEPA Determination: Transportation-related effects associated with Alternative 3 would be similar to, but slightly less than, those under Alternative 2 as a result of less development and fewer acres preserved. The impact would be significant and unavoidable.

CEQA Determination: Transportation-related effects associated with Alternative 3 would be similar to, but slightly less than, those under Alternative 2 as a result of less development and fewer acres preserved. The impact would be significant and unavoidable.

Impact TRA-2: Safety hazards due to design features, incompatible uses (e.g., hazards to vehicular, pedestrian, and bicycle transit), or inadequate emergency access (NEPA: significant and unavoidable; CEQA: significant and unavoidable)

The impacts under Alternative 3 are similar to those under Alternative 2 even though the impacts would be of a lesser extent when compared with Alternative 2 because less development and fewer acres of conservation land are expected under this alternative. The Local Agencies, except the City of Biggs, determined that implementation of their general plans would not result in significant impacts on traffic hazards or emergency access. However, the City of Biggs determined that significant and unavoidable impacts would result because funding has not been secured for roadway improvements whether planned roadway improvements would coincide with future development is uncertain.

NEPA Determination: The impact determination would be the same under Alternative 3 as for Alternative 2. The impact would be significant and unavoidable.

CEQA Determination: The impact determination would be the same under Alternative 3 as for Alternative 2. The impact would be significant and unavoidable.

Impact TRA-3: Potential conflicts with transportation plans, programs, and planned projects (NEPA: less than significant with mitigation; CEQA: less than significant with mitigation)

The potential for conflicts with transportation plans, programs, and planned projects associated with implementation of the conservation strategy and conservation measures would be the same as under Alternative 2. The establishment of conservation areas in areas where land may be required for transportation project rights-of-way could impair construction of these transportation projects; similarly, the construction of transportation projects in such areas could limit their suitability as conservation areas.

NEPA Determination: Similar to under Alternative 2, the potential for conflicts with transportation plans, programs, and planned projects would be significant; however, implementation of Mitigation Measure TRA-3 would reduce this impact to a less-than-significant level.

CEQA Determination: Similar to under Alternative 2, the potential for conflicts with transportation plans, programs, and planned projects would be significant; however, implementation of Mitigation Measure TRA-3 would reduce this impact to a less-than-significant level.

Mitigation Measure TRA-3: Avoid lands that are within or adjacent to proposed alignments of programmed or planned transportation projects

Alternative 4—Greater Conservation

Alternative 4 would be similar to Alternative 2 except that under Alternative 4, the conservation strategy would include the conservation of an additional 9,850 acres of grassland and 35,310 acres of riceland. Alternative 4 would include the same conservation measures as Alternative 2, and all other acreage protection targets for natural communities/land types would be the same as described under Alternative 2.

Under Alternative 4, covered activities such as urban and rural land developments and construction, operation, and maintenance of various infrastructure projects would be the same as under Alternative 1.

Impact TRA-1: A substantial increase in traffic compared to existing traffic volumes and the capacity of the roadway system (NEPA: significant and unavoidable; CEQA: significant and unavoidable)

Development associated with implementation of the Local Agencies' general plans would result in the same effects on traffic volumes as Alternative 1 and is expected to substantially increase traffic compared to existing traffic volumes and the capacity of the roadway system. The transportation-related effects associated with implementation of the conservation strategy and conservation measures would be similar to those under Alternative 2 and would not result in a substantial increase in traffic compared to existing traffic volumes and the capacity of the roadway system.

NEPA Determination: The impact determination would be the same as Alternative 2; the impact would be significant and unavoidable.

CEQA Determination: The impact determination would be the same as Alternative 2; the impact would be significant and unavoidable.

Impact TRA-2: Safety hazards due to design features, incompatible uses (e.g., hazards to vehicular, pedestrian, and bicycle transit), or inadequate emergency access (NEPA: significant and unavoidable; CEQA: significant and unavoidable)

The impacts under Alternative 4 are the same as those under Alternative 2 despite the increased area of conserved grassland and riceland. The Local Agencies, except the City of Biggs, determined that implementation of their general plans would not result in significant impacts on traffic hazards or emergency access. However, the City of Biggs determined that significant and unavoidable impacts would result because funding has not been secured for roadway improvements whether planned roadway improvements would coincide with future development is uncertain.

NEPA Determination: The impact determination would be the same as Alternative 2; the impact would be significant and unavoidable.

CEQA Determination: The impact determination would be the same as Alternative 2; the impact would be significant and unavoidable.

Impact TRA-3: Potential conflicts with transportation plans, programs, and planned projects (NEPA: less than significant with mitigation; CEQA: less than significant with mitigation)

The potential for conflicts with transportation plans, programs, and planned projects associated with implementation of the conservation strategy and conservation measures would be similar to

those described in Impact TRA-3 under Alternative 2. However, the increased area of conserved grassland and ricelands increases the potential for conflicts to arise when compared to Alternative 2.

NEPA Determination: Though the potential for conflicts with transportation plans, programs, and planned projects would be similar to those under Alternative 2, the increased area of conserved grassland and riceland increases the potential for conflicts to arise. Implementation of Mitigation Measure TRA-3 would reduce this significant impact to a less-than-significant level.

CEQA Determination: Though the potential for conflicts with transportation plans, programs, and planned projects would be similar to those under Alternative 2, the increased area of conserved grassland and riceland increases the potential for conflicts to arise. Implementation of Mitigation Measure TRA-3 would reduce this significant impact to a less-than-significant level.

Mitigation Measure TRA-3: Avoid lands that are within or adjacent to proposed alignments of programmed or planned transportation projects

15.2.4 Cumulative Analysis

Methods and Approach

The cumulative analysis for transportation impacts is a qualitative evaluation using the past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future projects listed in Chapter 3, Section 3.3.2, under *Cumulative Impacts*; the general plan EIR impact determinations for cumulative impacts, where applicable; and the impact determinations identified above for the various alternatives.

This analysis determines whether the covered activities would result in a cumulatively considerable incremental contribution that, when combined with the past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future projects, would result in a cumulatively significant impact.

Cumulative Impacts

Alternative 1—No Action (No Plan Implementation)

The Local Agencies determined that cumulatively considerable and significant impacts on the regional and local roadway system in the Plan Area would result from implementation of the general plans (development and associated infrastructure and transportation projects). Therefore, past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future projects—including implementation of the general plans—would result in cumulatively considerable and significant impacts on the transportation system.

Alternative 2—Proposed Action

The Local Agencies determined that cumulatively considerable and significant impacts on the roadway systems in their jurisdictions would result from implementation of Alternative 2. Accordingly, past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future projects—including implementation of the general plans—would result in cumulatively considerable and significant impacts on the transportation system. The conservation strategy and conservation measures are not expected to result in a substantial increase in traffic volumes or to degrade traffic operation of the existing roadway system and therefore would not contribute to the cumulatively considerable and

significant impacts on the transportation system from the other covered activities (i.e., development) Therefore, overall, Alternative 2 is expected to result in an cumulatively considerable and significant impacts.

Alternative 3—Reduced Development/Reduced Fill and Alternative 4—Greater Conservation

Although the extent of conservation associated with implementation of the conservation strategy and conservation measures varies with these two alternatives, the mechanism and implications associated with effects on transportation are the same as under Alternative 2. Neither Alternative 3 nor Alternative 4 would result in a cumulatively considerable contribution to cumulative impacts on transportation.

15.3 References

- Butte County. 2010. *Butte County General Plan 2030 Final Environmental Impact Report*. Transportation and Circulation Section. August 30. Oroville, CA. Available: <http://www.buttegeneralplan.net/products/2010-08-30_FEIR/default.asp>. Accessed: February 25, 2013.
- . 2011. *Bicycle Master Plan*. Adopted June 14. Available: <http://www.buttecounty.net/Portals/22/downloads/BikewayMasterPlan/5-23-11%20FINAL%20Draft_County_Bike_Plan%20June%2014%202011%20with%20Table%20of%20Contents.pdf>. Accessed: April 19, 2013.
- . 2012. *Butte County General Plan 2030*. Circulation Element. Adopted October 26, 2010. Amended November 6, 2012. Oroville, CA. Available: <http://www.buttegeneralplan.net/products/2012-11-06_GPA_ZO_Adopted/ButteCountyGP2030_Amended.pdf>. Accessed: February 25, 2013.
- Butte County Association of Governments. 2012. *2012-2035 Metropolitan Transportation Plan & Sustainable Communities Strategy*. Adopted December 13.
- . 2013. *2014 Regional Transportation Improvement Program. 2014/2015 – 2018/2019*. Adopted December 12.
- City of Biggs. 2014a. *General Plan Update*. Circulation Element. Biggs, CA. March. Prepared for City of Biggs. Prepared by PMC, Biggs, CA.
- . 2014b. *Final Draft Environmental Impact Report*. March. Prepared for City of Biggs. Prepared by PMC, Biggs, CA.
- City of Chico. 2011a. *Chico 2030 General Plan*. April. Chico, CA. Available: <http://www.chico.ca.us/document_library/general_plan/documents/CompleteGeneralPlan.pdf>. Accessed: February 25, 2013.
- . 2011b. *2030 General Plan Update Final Environmental Impact Report*. January. SCH# 2008122038. Chico, CA. Prepared by PMC, Chico, CA.
- City of Gridley. 2009. *2030 General Plan Final Environmental Impact Report*. November. Gridley, CA. Prepared by EDAW/AECOM, Sacramento, CA.

———. 2010. *2030 General Plan*. February 15. Gridley, CA. Available: <<http://www.gridley.ca.us/city-departments/planning-department/documents>>. Accessed: February 25, 2013.

City of Oroville. 2009a. *Oroville 2030 General Plan*. Submitted June 2. Oroville, CA. Prepared by Design, Community & Environment, Berkeley, CA, in association with Fehr & Peers Associates and Jones & Stokes Associates, Inc. Available: <<http://www.cityoforoville.org/index.aspx?page=451#1>>. Accessed: May 27, 2011.

———. 2009b. *2030 General Plan Final Environmental Impact Report*. March 31. SCH# 2008022024. Oroville, CA. Prepared by Design, Community & Environment, Berkeley, CA, in association with Fehr & Peers Associates and Jones & Stokes Associates, Inc. Available: <<http://www.cityoforoville.org/index.aspx?page=452>>. Accessed: February 25, 2013.