
Chapter 4 Cumulative Impacts

4.1 Overview

NEPA defines cumulative impact as “the impact...which results from the incremental impact of the action when added to other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions regardless of what agency (federal or non-federal) or person undertakes such other actions.” CEQA defines cumulative impacts as “two or more individual effects which, when considered together are considerable,” and suggests that cumulative impacts can result from individually minor but collectively significant projects taking place over a period of time” (State CEQA Guidelines Section 15355). NEPA includes cumulative impacts within the scope of impacts to be considered in an environmental document.

CEQA documents are required to include a discussion of cumulative effects when those effects are significant, and the State CEQA Guidelines suggest two possible methods for assessing potential cumulative effects (State CEQA Guidelines Section 15130). The first method is a list based approach, which considers a list of past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future projects producing related or cumulative impacts. The second method is projections based, and uses a summary of projections contained in an adopted general plan or related planning document that is designed to evaluate regional or areawide conditions.

While the use of regional projections is one possible method of analyzing cumulative effects under CEQA, it is the required method under NEPA. FHWA guidelines require that regional growth projections from the metropolitan planning organization (Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) and Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG) in this case) be used as input for the assumed future year conditions.

The Sonoma County Model was used to develop the travel forecasts for development and growth through the year 2030 in the region. The Sonoma County Model estimates future traffic and transit travel demand for the entire county based on projected land use from the 2020 General Plan (General Plan Update currently is in process) prepared by Sonoma County and adjusted to 2030 using *Projections 2002* data from ABAG. The 2030 model forecasts include the other planned Highway 101 improvement projects, as described in Section 1.3.3, Related Projects.

The Sonoma County Model and regional projections are used to evaluate impacts on the regional level, as discussed in Section 4.2, Regional Context. A list-based approach is used to address issues “on the ground” that relate to the proposed project area of disturbance and that of related projects. These issues are discussed in Section 4.3, Local Context.

4.2 Regional Context

Because this document is based on regional land use forecasts for 2030, and assumes transportation improvements programmed within the same time frame, effects evaluated with the project include the cumulative effects of development within the region. Thus, additional analysis of cumulative effects related to specific development and transportation improvement projects within the region is not necessary for impacts such as land use, transportation, air quality, and noise.

4.3 Local Context

Cumulative effects are not always regional in scope, and the current project was analyzed to determine whether less than significant environmental effects that would be experienced locally could become significant when considered in combination with other reasonably foreseeable future projects in the project area. Reasonably foreseeable future projects are here defined as the projects assumed in the 2030 No-Build Alternative described in Chapter 1 and the other related projects described in Section 1.3.3, Related Projects. *Although the Marin-Sonoma Narrows Project is scheduled to be built by 2030, the draft EIR/EIS is scheduled to be released in Fall 2007 and no information is available at this time.*

The search for cumulative impacts for this environmental document was also extended to other types of local development projects that might contribute to cumulative loss of resources in the general project corridor. Various sources were reviewed to identify local development projects in the project vicinity, as described below:

- City of Cotati, *Final Addendum to the South Sonoma Business Park EIR*, December 2003;
- City of Cotati Planning and Building Department, *Planning Department Development Project Status Report*, December 2004;
- City of Petaluma Community Development Department, December 2004;
- City of Rohnert Park Planning Department, *Status Report on Current Approved/Proposed Projects*, October 2004;
- City of Rohnert Park Planning Department website; (<http://www.ci.rohnert-park.ca.us/cityhall/specificplans.cfm>);
- Sonoma County Permit and Resource Management Department website; (<http://www.sonoma-county.org/prmd/docs/eir/CanonManorDEIR/index.htm>);
- Sonoma County Public Works Department, January 2005; and
- Town of Windsor's Planning and Housing Department website; (<http://www.ci.windsor.ca.us/210-ShilohRoadVisionPlanMainFile.html>).

The additional local development projects identified and included in the cumulative impact analysis are identified in Table 4.3-1. Cumulative impacts considered for these local projects, the projects included in the No-Build Alternative and the related projects identified in Section 1.3.3, Related Projects include biological, farmland, aesthetic, construction traffic and relocation impacts. These are discussed by category in the following subsections.

| Table 4.3-1: Non-Transportation Projects Considered for Cumulative Impacts | | |
|---|---|---|
| Project & Development Type | Location | Shared Impact Issues |
| South Sonoma Business Park - General commercial and highway commercial. Under construction. | North of Highway 116, west of Redwood Drive, south of Helman Lane and east of Alder Avenue, City of Cotati. | Water quality; CTS. CTS habitat present and mitigated. |
| University District Specific Plan - Student housing at Sonoma State University. Draft EIR Nov. 1, 1999. | Rohnert Park Expressway, north of Copeland Creek, west of Petaluma Hill Road. | Water quality; CTS habitat but no CTS present because none known east of Highway 101. |
| Wilfred/Dowdell Village Specific Plan - General commercial. Date of DEIR, June 1, 1999. Construction completed. | Dowdell Avenue, north of Business Park Drive, intersected by Wilfred Avenue. | Water quality; CTS discussed, habitat not present. |
| Costco - General commercial. Construction completed. | Redwood Drive, north of Rohnert Park Expressway and Hinebaugh Creek, south of Business Park Drive. | Air quality; water quality; hydrology; no CTS habitat. |
| Northwest Specific Plan – Residential, commercial and industrial. Date of Specific Plan, December 2004. | Business Park Drive, west of Dowdell Avenue, east of Langer Avenue, and south of Millbrae Avenue. | Water quality / hydrology, potential effect on riparian habitat, wetlands, CTS. |
| Canon Manor West Subdivision – Infrastructure improvements. Date of DEIR, June 28, 2004. | West of Petaluma Hill Road, south of East Cotati Avenue and east of Bodway Parkway immediately east and adjacent to Rohnert Park. | Air quality, water quality / hydrology, CTS habitat present and mitigated. |
| Shiloh Road Village - Residential, and commercial. Date of DEIR, September 2004. | Both sides of Shiloh Road between Highway 101 and Old Redwood Highway. | Air quality; substantial adverse effect on wetlands. |

4.3.1 Biological Resources

4.3.1.1 Natural Communities

Section 1.3.3.1, Highway 101 HOV Lane Widening and Improvements Projects, describes the related projects in the Highway 101 corridor. Because all of these projects are similarly adding HOV lanes, they would be expected to affect natural communities in roughly similar proportions to this project, as discussed in Section 3.15.1, Natural Communities. The predominant community in the project corridor is ruderal/disturbed vegetation, and this community is not particularly sensitive for habitat values. The sensitive communities—wetlands/waters and riparian—would be fully mitigated in accordance with specific environmental laws for the protection of such resources. Consequently no substantial cumulative impacts are anticipated from all these projects combined.

Impacts to natural communities were also considered for the local development projects previously listed. Where such impacts were identified (without quantification), it appears that they would be fully mitigated in accordance with specific environmental laws for the protection of such resources.

4.3.1.2 Wetlands

Table 4.3-2 summarizes the cumulative permanent losses from the following related projects for which wetlands impacts have been defined:

| Project | Total Area of Impact | Cumulative Impact (After Mitigation Provided) |
|--|----------------------|---|
| Highway 101 HOV Lane Widening Project - Steele Lane to Windsor River Road | 0.09 ha (0.21 ac) | Impacts would be fully mitigated in accordance with environmental laws and regulations, so no cumulative impact would result. |
| Route 101 HOV Widening – Route 12 to Steele Lane | 0.04 ha (0.10 ac) | |
| Highway 101 – Wilfred to Route 12 Widening and Soundwall Construction | 0.17 ha (0.42 ac) | |
| Highway 101 HOV Lane Widening Project - Old Redwood Highway to Rohnert Park Expressway | 0.28 ha (0.70 ac) | |
| Canon Manor West Subdivision | 0.00 ha (0.00 ac) | |
| South Sonoma Business Park | 1.42 ha (3.50 ac) | |
| Costco, Redwood Drive | 0.00 ha (0.00 ac) | |
| Wilfred / Dowdell Village Specific Plan | 0.10 ha (0.25 ac) | |
| Northwest Specific Plan | Not yet determined | |
| University District Specific Plan | Not yet determined | |
| Shiloh Road Village Plan | Not yet determined | |
| Total (of projects with impacts to wetlands) | 2.10 ha (5.18 ac) | |

Because the individual project and total impacts are relatively minor and will be mitigated to ensure no net loss of wetlands and other waters, the proposed project does not contribute substantially to cumulative impacts with these other projects.

4.3.1.3 California Tiger Salamander

The present project and four other projects in the general project vicinity appear to affect areas with potential to contain California Tiger Salamander (CTS). Consultation with the USFWS was completed in October 2006. Please refer to Table 4.3-3 for results. No comments from CDFG have been received.

| Project | Permanent Impacts | Temporary Impacts |
|--|---------------------|----------------------|
| Highway 101 HOV Lane Widening Project - Steele Lane to Windsor River Road | 6.36 ha (15.72 ac) | 6.36 ha (15.72 ac)* |
| Route 101 HOV Widening – Route 12 to Steele Lane | 0.00 ha (0.00 ac) | 0.00 ha (0.00 ac) |
| Highway 101 – Wilfred to Route 12 Widening and Soundwall Construction | 1.74 ha (4.31 ac) | 1.74 ha (4.31 ac)* |
| Highway 101 HOV Lane Widening Project - Old Redwood Highway to Rohnert Park Expressway | 12.19 ha (30.14 ac) | 12.19 ha (30.14 ac)* |
| Canon Manor West Subdivision | 0.00 ha (0.00 ac) | 0.00 ha (0.00 ac) |
| South Sonoma Business Park | 13.81 ha (34.13 ac) | 0.00 ha (0.00 ac) |

* Note: The effect analysis used for the Biological Opinion is based on the interim guidelines for the Conservation Strategy (Conservation Strategy Team 2005b). The interim guidelines do not differentiate between temporary and permanent effects.

Federal highway projects and other actions are generally subject to federal and state laws and permit processes requiring consideration of and mitigation for impacts to special-status species and their habitats; to wetlands/waters; and to water quality. These laws and requirements ensure that the impacts of such undertakings will be fully mitigated. Impacts to CTS are covered under these laws and requirements, since the species not only has federal protection by virtue of its listing status, but also its breeding habitat consists of ponded areas of sufficient duration and quality for these areas to be protected as special aquatic sites. Minimization and mitigation measures required for these projects would ensure that they have no contribution to cumulative impacts. For example, the South Sonoma Business Park will fully mitigate for the loss of CTS habitat by providing replacement habitat on an acre for acre basis within the Santa Rosa Plain. The Canon Manor project incorporated BMPs although it did not identify any permanent effects.

4.3.1.4 Valley/Coast Live Oaks

The proposed project would remove *five to 56 mature valley oaks* along the Highway 101 right-of-way within the project limits. These would be replanted at a *1:1 ratio where feasible within the project limits and right of way*. *Avoidance and minimization approaches as identified in Section 3.6.4 will be incorporated during final design to reduce tree loss below the upper end of the reported ranges.*

There are three related projects for which there is information on impacts to oak trees. The Highway 101 – Route 12 to Steele Lane project would remove about 80 mature and about 220 small volunteer valley/coast live oak trees; the project would replant up to 300 oaks as replacement woodlands in a natural area either along Highway 101 or in the immediate vicinity. The Highway 101 – Wilfred Avenue to Route 12 project removed about 87 valley/coast live oak trees and will replace them near the Mendocino Avenue off-ramp of Highway 101. The Highway 101 – Steele Lane to Windsor River Road project would remove approximately 102 valley/coast live oak trees and would replace them at a ratio and location(s) to be determined. Because of the tree replanting, there would be no substantial cumulative impact on valley/coast live oaks.

The other projects shown in Table 4.3-1 identified no impacts to valley/coastal oaks.

4.3.2 Aesthetics

The primary effect that this project and related Highway 101 projects would have on corridor aesthetics would be the removal of redwood trees along the highway. The present project would remove *between 387 and 1,061 mature redwood trees* out of *3,141 redwood trees* within the project limits, or *between 12 and 34 percent* of the total. These redwood trees are outside of their biological range, do not provide habitat, and do not support redwood populations, however, they are considered important aesthetic resources. These redwoods were planted in clusters along Highway 101 to establish its character as the “Redwood Highway.” The proposed project would replant redwood trees along Highway 101, but the replacement ratio has not been determined.

There are four related projects for which there is information on impacts to redwood trees. The Highway 101 – Route 12 to Steele Lane project would remove about 100 redwood trees, which make up about one-third of the existing redwoods within its project area; the project would maximize

replanting of redwood trees along Highway 101 where they can be placed without impairing sight distances or encroaching into clear recovery areas. The Highway 101 – Wilfred Avenue to Route 12 project removed about 200 redwood trees and will replace them along certain points of the straightaway segments of the project, at interchanges in the project area, and along straightaway segments of Highway 101 south of the project area. The Highway 101 – Steele Lane to Windsor River Road project would remove *between 171 and 390* redwood trees, which represents approximately eight to 18 percent of the total within its project area. The Canon Manor West Subdivision, located east and adjacent to the City of Rohnert Park in Sonoma County, would remove up to 15 redwood trees from the project area. The project would replace the removed redwood trees in approximately the same location.

Because the redwood trees would not be located at their original sites, the visual character of the highway would change. Loss of these redwood trees, though non-native, would adversely affect the landscape character of the highway and the aesthetics of the driving experience. Replacement planting plans would be developed in coordination with Sonoma County and the local cities. Because of the replacement planting, there would be no substantially adverse cumulative impact to corridor aesthetics.

4.3.3 Relocations

Other HOV widening projects in the Highway 101 corridor would require relocations, as shown in Table 4.3-4 for those projects whose relocation impacts have already been quantified. Because these projects' relocations would be separated by some years and all would provide relocation benefits in accordance with the Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Act of 1970, as amended, these projects would not be in competition for relocation resources and no adverse cumulative relocation impacts are predicted.

**Table 4.3-4: Residential and Nonresidential Relocation
Under the Build Alternative**

| Project | Single Family Units (Residents) | Mobile Homes | Multi-Family | | Estimated Total Residential Units (Residents) | Businesses (Employees) |
|--|---------------------------------------|-----------------|----------------|----------|---|---------------------------|
| | | | Build- ings | Units | | |
| Highway 101 – Wilfred to Route 12 Widening and Soundwall Construction | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Route 101 HOV Widening – Route 12 to Steele Lane | 4 (12) | 0 | 0 | 0 | 4 (12) | 3 (20) |
| Highway 101 HOV Lane Widening Project – Old Redwood Highway to Rohnert Park Expressway | 3 (6) | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3 (6) | 1 (10) |
| Highway 101 HOV Lane Widening Project – Steele Lane to Windsor River Road | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Canon Manor West Subdivision | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Northwest Specific Plan | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| University District Specific Plan | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Shiloh Road Village Plan | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Total | 7 (18) | 0 | 0 | 0 | 7 (18) | 4 (30) |

4.3.4 Traffic

If two or more projects in the same transportation corridor are under construction at the same time, there could be excessive traffic delays and detours. As described in Section 2.5, Project Schedule, construction of the proposed project is planned to begin in 2008. As described in Section 1.3.3.1, Highway 101 HOV Lane Widening and Improvements Projects, construction of the related projects would begin in various years, but assuming a construction period of three years for each project, the construction of all of the remaining Highway 101 HOV projects would overlap in 2007 through 2008, with the overlaps tapering on either side of this period.

There would be two possible sources of delays over the 38-mile corridor from Route 37 to Windsor: 1) mainline delays due to construction adjacent to the traveled lanes or temporary closures of the mainline due to work overhead or connecting into the highway and 2) delays to entering/exiting traffic due to temporary ramp closures, with attendant detours. Planned construction traffic management provisions in the Traffic Management Plan for each of the projects would minimize the mainline delays due to construction adjacent to the traveled lanes; this would avoid a substantial cumulative effect. The delays due to temporary mainline or ramp closures would primarily affect the areas within each project limits. Close coordination among the projects on temporary closures would avoid a substantial cumulative impact.

Permanent cumulative effects of Highway 101 widening would be beneficial, as future traffic demand would be better accommodated by increased effective capacity with the HOV lanes.

4.3.5 Farmlands

Table 4.3-5 summarizes the cumulative permanent losses from the following related projects for which farmlands impacts have been defined. The proposed project would require approximately 0.44 hectares (ha) (1.08 ac) of farmland directly adjacent to the existing Highway 101 right-of-way. The Highway 101 HOV Lane Widening Project – Steele Lane to Windsor River Road would require from 1.11 ha (2.74 ac) to 1.30 ha (3.21 ac) of farmland also directly adjacent to the Highway 101 corridor. The Highway 101 – Wilfred to Route 12 Widening Project and the Route 101 HOV Lane Widening Project – Route 12 to Steele Lane would have no effect on farmlands. Affected farmland for all related projects would account for approximately 0.004 percent of the total farmland in Sonoma County.

In compliance with the Farmland Protection Policy Act, the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) was contacted for their assessment of affected farmland for both the proposed project and the Highway 101 HOV Lane Widening Project – Steele Lane to Windsor River Road. Based on NRCS review, and in compliance with federal regulation 7 CFR 658.4, it was determined that the affected sites would be given a minimal level of consideration for protection and no alternate sites needed to be evaluated. Because the total impacts to farmland would be extremely small, there would be no substantial cumulative impact to corridor farmland.

The other projects shown in Table 4.3-5 identified no impacts to farmlands.

| Project | Total Area of Impact |
|--|--|
| Route 101 HOV Widening – Route 12 to Steele Lane | 0.00 ha (0.00 ac) |
| Highway 101 – Wilfred to Route 12 Widening and Soundwall Construction | 0.00 ha (0.00 ac) |
| Highway 101 HOV Lane Widening Project – Old Redwood Highway to Rohnert Park Expressway | 0.44 ha (1.08 ac) |
| Highway 101 HOV Lane Widening Project – Steele Lane to Windsor River Road | 1.11 ha (2.75 ac) – 1.30 ha (3.21 ac) |
| Canon Manor West Subdivision | 0.00 ha (0.00 ac) |
| Northwest Specific Plan | 0.00 ha (0.00 ac) |
| University District Specific Plan | 0.00 ha (0.00 ac) |
| Shiloh Road Village Plan | 0.00 ha (0.00 ac) |
| Total | 1.55 ha (3.83 ac) – 2.74 ha (4.29 ac) |