



## **CITY of CALABASAS**

### **TRAFFIC AND TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION AGENDA REPORT**

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**DATE: JUNE 15, 2021**

**TO: TRAFFIC AND TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION**

**FROM: ROBERT YALDA, PE, TE, PUBLIC WORKS DIRECTOR/CITY ENGINEER**

**BY: THOMAS MERICLE, PE, TE, TRAFFIC ENGINEERING SERVICES**

**SUBJECT: UPDATED TRANSPORTATION STUDY GUIDELINES**

**MEETING**  
**DATE: JUNE 22, 2021**

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#### **SUMMARY RECOMMENDATION:**

Staff recommends that the Traffic and Transportation Commission review and provide comments on the updated Transportation Study Guidelines. The updated Guidelines reflect the recommended thresholds, language clarification, and guidance for how traffic analysis is to be conducted. There are now going to be two sections addressing the two areas of evaluation:

1. Transportation Environmental Impact Analysis (TIA). This is the analysis required for CEQA Environmental Clearance. The analysis is for determining the project environmental clearance and reflects the new Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) methodology, thresholds, and mitigation options.
2. Local Transportation Operational Assessment (LTA). The second part is optional depending on the project size and potential impacts. It is similar to the previous traffic study guidelines that evaluates operational impacts to the local roadway network such as on- and off-site circulation, intersection levels of service, queuing, safety, and active transportation or transit impacts.

#### **BACKGROUND:**

In September 2020, the Commission approved the City's new Transportation Impact Thresholds for California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) compliance related to

transportation analysis. The thresholds will be considered later this year by the City Council as a part of a General Plan update. Once adopted, these new thresholds will be provided to developers, engineers, and planners for determining transportation impacts of projects and plans. In the interim the City is required to follow the State of California Office of Planning and Research recommended guidance which is similar to the proposed City thresholds.

Prior to July 2020, public agencies could use level of service (LOS) to determine environmental impacts of projects and plans. With the shift to VMT as the impact metric the City is bifurcating the traffic analysis process to be consistent with the General Plan and State law. The new guidelines reflect both the CEQA and local agency impact criteria.

## **DISCUSSION/ANALYSIS:**

Projects and plans that are submitted to the City and are required to have a CEQA clearance analysis (determined by Planning) will be initially screened through a transportation assessment checklist to determine if the project has a less than significant VMT impact or if an expanded VMT analysis will need to be conducted, and then determine if a Local Transportation Assessment (LTA) is required. A copy of the checklist is attached. This checklist may be prepared by either Planning or Engineering staff. If a project does not get screened out it would have to be further evaluated for VMT impacts and/or prepare a local transportation operational assessment. The new process for screening and analysis is described below.

### **Part 1: Transportation Impact Analysis for CEQA Compliance (TIA)**

Initially the checklist will be used for initial screening using the following steps:

#### *Step 1: Check Project Type:*

Certain project types are presumed to have a less than significant impact. For instance, maintenance of existing facilities, installation of safety devices, installation of bicycle or pedestrian facilities, reducing existing vehicle lanes, modifications to on-street parking, adding alternative fuel charging infrastructure. In addition, local serving retail projects that generally improve the convenience of shopping close to home and has the effect of reducing regional vehicle travel. Similarly, adding local neighborhood serving parks and schools can reduce vehicle travel from facilities located further away.

#### *Step 2: Check if project is within a Low VMT generating area:*

Residential and office projects located within a low VMT-generating area are presumed to have a less than significant impact. In addition, other employment-related and mixed-use land use projects may be screened if the project can reasonably be expected to generate VMT per resident, per worker, or per service population that is similar to the existing land uses in the low VMT area. Low VMT-generating areas are those that

have VMT 15% lower than the baseline VMT and can be represented on GIS maps using data from the SCAG regional travel forecasting model

*Step 3: Check for Proximity to Existing Priority Transit Services:*

Projects located within a high quality transit service may be presumed to have a less than significant impact. Unfortunately, the City does not currently have transit services that would qualify as high-quality transit.

Full VMT Analysis

Projects not screened through the steps above would then be required to complete a full VMT analysis using the SCAG regional traffic model to determine the projected VMT from the development project. The VMT would then be compared to the City's adopted thresholds to determine if there is a significant or less than significant impact for CEQA compliance.

The City's has a recommended threshold of 15% below the citywide baseline average VMT for the type of project. This matches the State recommended threshold and was previously supported by the Commission.

Mitigation

If a project has a significant impact, Transportation Demand Management (TDM) strategies would need to be built into the project to reduce the VMT below the City's established thresholds.

Transportation Project Thresholds

CEQA review is also required for transportation projects. These projects have the potential to change travel behavior and travel patterns. These projects are required to quantify the amount of additional vehicle travel and assess air quality, greenhouse gas, energy, and noise impacts in order to determine the project impacts. Any transportation project that reduces or has no impact on VMT on the regional network are presumed to have less than significant impact. Types of projects that would fall under this category are maintenance, safety, reduction in vehicle lanes, active transportation facilities, and transit services.

Transportation projects that are presumed to increase VMT on the regional network and therefore may have a significant impact are roadway capacity enhancing projects such as the addition of through lanes on an existing roadway or the construction of a new roadway.

For these types of projects, the City will be required to assess the amount of vehicle travel the project will add and compare that to the significance threshold. If there is an impact, the impact will need to be mitigated.

## **Part 2: Local Transportation Assessment (LTA) for Discretionary Approval**

The following include the primary components of a Local Transportation Assessment (LTA). Small projects that generate less than 110 daily vehicle trips typically do not have to prepare a formal LTA that determines levels of service or other roadway operational impacts. However, they project will still need to be reviewed through the development review process for site circulation, safety, and bicyclist/pedestrian safety access. Projects that are expected to generate 110 daily trips or more will have to prepare a formal LTA. The scope of the LTA will depend on the size and location of the project.

The guidelines below match the exiting traffic impact guidelines and is consistent with the policies in the current General Plan. If changes are made to the policies or language in the General Plan related to traffic impacts, the Guidelines will be updated to maintain consistency.

### Study Area

The study area for small and medium-sized projects will focus on roadways providing immediate access to the project site, such as the roadway(s) containing the project's primary driveway or secondary access point, or the intersection(s) immediately adjacent to the project site. An expanded study area should be considered for large projects. Analyzed locations should primarily consist of major signalized intersections that are likely to be affected by the project. Unsignalized intersections would typically only be studied if future signalization may be desirable by the City.

### Project Trip Generation

New travel trips generated by the proposed project will be estimated based on the best available data; typically data compiled by the Institute of Transportation Engineers (ITE) Where possible, trip generation should be based on data relevant to the specific project type and end use.

### Intersection Evaluation

Intersections will be evaluated for operational impacts based on changes in the level of service. The preferred methodology to analyze both signalized and unsignalized intersections is from a publication called the Highway Capacity Manual (HCM). Level of Service (LOS) ratings intersections are based on average control delay expressed in seconds per vehicle. The HCM methodology accounts for vehicular volumes, lane geometries, signal phasing, signal timings, bicycle and pedestrian volumes, upstream bottlenecks impacting travel flows, and the distribution of travel flows throughout the peak hour (peak hour factor).

The City's thresholds for signalized level of service are generally LOS D for local City intersections and LOS E for Caltrans interchange intersections. The thresholds for

unsignalized intersections is generally LOS D. More details about the thresholds are in the Guidelines.

The guidelines also require that a signal warrant analysis be performed to determine if impacted unsignalized locations should be considered for signalization by the project. The traffic signal warrant analysis uses the latest edition of the *California Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices* (MUTCD). The traffic signal warrants help determine if the traffic volumes, bicyclist or pedestrian volumes, or safety history warrant the consideration of installing a traffic signal. Should an applicant request a traffic signal at a project driveway or adjacent intersection and meets the criteria above, the following is required for consideration and approval by the City:

- A Synchro/SimTraffic (traffic signal timing modeling software) analysis to determine if the signal could fit into the existing system/corridor traffic progression (if appropriate).
- The project shall be required to pay for the installation of the traffic signal and connection to the City's traffic signal system.

In addition, the City requires any existing traffic signal adjacent to the project to be upgraded as part of any required frontage or intersection improvements.

#### Site Access Analysis

The following analyses will be required to be performed for many medium to large project to improve the project access circulation and to limit driveways and local street access points:

- a) Intersection and Driveway Sight Distance for Safety
- b) Driveway Length and Gated Entrance Queuing
- c) Driveway Impacts to Local Roadway
- d) Bicyclist, Pedestrian, and Transit Facilities Accessibility

#### On-Site Circulation and Safety Analysis

The following analyses will be included on medium to large projects for circulation within the project site:

- a) Drive-Thru Queuing and Access
- b) Pedestrian and Bicycle access
- c) On-Site Large Truck Circulation.
- d) On-Site Sight Distance for Drive Aisles

#### Emergency Evacuation Evaluation

Projects may be required to perform an analysis regarding emergency evacuation related to disasters such as wildfires or landslides. However, this analysis is not part of the local transportation study. Those efforts are to be performed by other

consultants who specialize in that field of practice. However, the data, analysis, and results of the local transportation study analyses will be made available to those experts for their evaluation if requested.

The results of the traffic analysis will be documented in a Local Transportation Study Report that will be reviewed by City staff and used in the planning approval process.

**FISCAL IMPACT/SOURCE OF FUNDING:**

There is no direct fiscal impact to the City for updating the Local Transportation Study Guidelines.

**REQUESTED ACTION:**

Staff recommends that the Traffic and Transportation Commission review and provide comments on the updated Transportation Study Guidelines.

**ATTACHMENTS:**

Attachment A - Draft Local Transportation Study Guidelines  
Attachment B - Draft Screening Checklist