



South Coast Air Quality Management District

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SENT VIA E-MAIL AND USPS:

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SR74.Rumble.Strips.Project@dot.ca.gov

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Mitigated Negative Declaration (MND) for the Proposed State Route 74 Widen Lanes, Add Shoulders & Rumble Strips Project

South Coast Air Quality Management District (South Coast AQMD) staff appreciates the opportunity to comment on the above-mentioned document. The following comments are meant as guidance for the Lead Agency and should be incorporated into the Final MND.

South Coast AQMD Staff's Summary of Project Description

The Lead Agency proposes to widen existing lanes and outside shoulders to 12 feet and 4 feet, respectively, along a six-mile segment of State Route 74 from the Orange County Line [Post Mile (PM) 0.0] to Monte Vista Street (PM 5.8) (Proposed Project). The Proposed Project will also include construction of a median of two feet in width and shoulder ground-in-rumble strips of one foot in width. The Proposed Project is located near the City of Lake Elsinore in Riverside County. Although the Proposed Project involves the widening of SR-74, it is not expected to increase or induce traffic capacity of the existing roadway¹; the six-mile segment of widening is intended to address roadway deficiencies² that would result in safety improvements along the existing roadway, which is located in mountainous terrain with many vertical and horizontal curves³. Construction activities are expected to occur over 18 months⁴. Upon a review of the MND, South Coast AQMD staff found that residential units are scattered along SR-74 between PM 0.0 to PM 5.8⁵.

South Coast AQMD Staff's Summary of the Air Quality Analysis

In the Air Quality Analysis, the Lead Agency *qualitatively* analyzed the Proposed Project's construction air quality impacts and found that impacts would be less than significant due to a short construction period⁶ (*emphasis added*). The Lead Agency also *qualitatively* analyzed the Proposed Project's operational air quality impacts and found that impacts would be less than significant because the Proposed Project is not a capacity-increasing transportation project⁷. In the Greenhouse Gas Emissions Analysis, the Lead Agency used the Sacramento Metropolitan Air Quality Management District's Road Construction Emissions Model (RCEM) to quantify the Proposed Project's greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions during construction and found that the Proposed Project would result in 1,559 metric tons of CO₂-equivalent emissions.

¹ Initial Study/Environmental Assessment, Chapter 2, Page 2-7.

² *Ibid.* Chapter 1, Page 1-10.

³ *Ibid.* Chapter 2, Page 2-29.

⁴ *Ibid.* Chapter 4, Page 4-7.

⁵ *Ibid.* Chapter 2, Page 2-1.

⁶ *Ibid.* Chapter 3, Page 3-4.

⁷ *Ibid.*

South Coast AQMD Staff's Comments

General Comments

South Coast AQMD staff is concerned with the Air Quality Analysis in the MND. The Lead Agency did not quantify the Proposed Project's construction or operational emissions in the MND⁸ to support the findings that the Proposed Project's construction and operational air quality impacts would be less than significant. One of the basic purposes of CEQA is to inform government decision makers and the public about the potential, significant environmental effects of proposed activities (CEQA Guidelines Section 15002(a)(1)). A mitigated negative declaration is appropriate when the Lead Agency finds that the project will not have a significant effect on the environment after incorporating mitigation measures (CEQA Guidelines Sections 15070 to 15075). Reasons to support this finding shall be documented in the initial study. Evaluation of air quality impacts, unlike some other impact areas, easily lends itself to quantification. Not only does quantification make it easier for the public and decision-makers to understand the breadth and depth of the potential air quality impacts, but it also facilitates the identification of mitigation measures, if required, to reduce any significant adverse air quality impacts. Without quantifying emissions from construction and operational activities, the MND has not made the documentation which serves as substantial evidence to support a fair argument that the Proposed Project would not have any adverse effects on air quality. Since the Lead Agency used the RCEM to quantify the Proposed Project's GHG emissions, the same roadway construction emissions model is recommended for use to quantify the Proposed Project's regional and localized criteria pollutant emissions from construction and operational activities in the Final MND. The revised Air Quality Analysis would serve as substantial evidence to support the Lead Agency's findings. More detailed comments are discussed below.

Regional and Localized Air Quality Analysis during Construction and Operation

Air quality impacts from both construction (including demolition, if any) and operations should be calculated. Construction-related air quality impacts typically include, but are not limited to, emissions from the use of heavy-duty equipment from grading, earth-loading/unloading, paving, architectural coatings, off-road mobile sources (e.g., heavy-duty construction equipment) and on-road mobile sources (e.g., construction worker vehicle trips, material transport trips). Operation-related emissions may be caused by a number of sources, including, but not limited to, stationary sources (e.g., boilers), area sources (e.g., solvents and coatings), and vehicular trips (e.g., on- and off-road tailpipe emissions and entrained dust). Air quality impacts from indirect sources such as sources that generate or attract vehicular trips, if applicable to the Proposed Project, should also be quantified and included in the analysis. South Coast AQMD staff recommends that the Lead Agency quantify criteria pollutant emissions from construction and operational activities, and compare those emissions to the applicable South Coast AQMD's regional CEQA air quality significance thresholds for both construction⁹ and operation¹⁰ to determine the level of significance in the Final MND.

Sensitive receptors are people that have an increased sensitivity to air pollution or environmental contaminants. They include schools, parks and playgrounds, daycare centers, nursing homes, elderly care facilities, hospitals, and residential dwelling units. As stated above, although scattered, existing residential uses are located along SR-74 from post mile (PM) 0.0 to PM 5.8. To ensure that any nearby residences

⁸ Please note that no air quality technical study documenting construction and operational emissions estimations was included with the MND that was circulated for public review and comments from February 15, 2019 to March 16, 2019.

⁹ South Coast Air Quality Management District. South Coast AQMD Air Quality Significance Thresholds. Accessed at: <http://www.aqmd.gov/docs/default-source/ceqa/handbook/scaqmd-air-quality-significance-thresholds.pdf>.

¹⁰ South Coast Air Quality Management District. South Coast AQMD Air Quality Significance Thresholds. Accessed at: <http://www.aqmd.gov/docs/default-source/ceqa/handbook/scaqmd-air-quality-significance-thresholds.pdf>.

are not adversely affected by construction activities that may be occurring in close proximity, and to analyze the worse-case localized air quality impact scenario, South Coast AQMD staff recommends that the Lead Agency identify the nearest sensitive receptor to quantify the Proposed Project's localized construction emissions in the Final MND. South Coast AQMD guidance for performing a localized air quality analysis is available on South Coast AQMD's website¹¹.

Mitigation Measures

If the Lead Agency finds, after revisions to the Air Quality Analysis, that construction and/or operational emissions would exceed South Coast AQMD's air quality CEQA daily significance thresholds, feasible mitigation measures to minimize these impacts are required. Several resources are available to assist the Lead Agency with identifying potential mitigation measures for the Proposed Project, including:

- Chapter 11 "Mitigating the Impact of a Project" of South Coast AQMD'S *CEQA Air Quality Handbook*. South Coast AQMD's CEQA web pages available here: <http://www.aqmd.gov/home/regulations/ceqa/air-quality-analysis-handbook/mitigation-measures-and-control-efficiencies>
- South Coast AQMD's Rule 403 – Fugitive Dust, and the Implementation Handbook for controlling construction-related emissions and Rule 1403 – Asbestos Emissions from Demolition/Renovation Activities
- South Coast AQMD's Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Plan (MMRP) for the 2016 Air Quality Management Plan (2016 AQMP) available here (starting on page 86): <http://www.aqmd.gov/docs/default-source/Agendas/Governing-Board/2017/2017-mar3-035.pdf>
- California Air Pollution Control Officers Association (CAPCOA)'s *Quantifying Greenhouse Gas Mitigation Measures* available here: <http://www.capcoa.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/11/CAPCOA-Quantification-Report-9-14-Final.pdf>

Additional mitigation measures that are capable of reducing construction-related air quality impacts resulting from off-road construction equipment and heavy-duty haul trucks as resources available to the Lead Agency include the following:

- Use off-road diesel-powered construction equipment that meets or exceeds the California Air Resources Board (CARB) and U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) Tier 4 off-road emissions standards for equipment rated at 50 horsepower or greater during construction. Such equipment should be outfitted with Best Available Control Technology (BACT) devices including, but not limited to, a CARB certified Level 3 Diesel Particulate Filters (DPF). Level 3 DPFs are capable of achieving at least an 85 percent reduction in particulate matter emissions. A list of CARB verified DPFs are available on the CARB website. Additionally, the Lead Agency should include this requirement in applicable bid documents, and that successful contractor(s) must demonstrate the ability to supply compliant equipment prior to the commencement of any construction activities. A copy of each unit's certified tier specification and CARB or South Coast AQMD operating permit (if applicable) should be available upon request at the time of mobilization of each applicable unit of equipment. Additionally, the Lead Agency should require periodic reporting and provision of written documentation by contractors to ensure compliance, and conduct regular inspections to the maximum extent feasible to ensure compliance. In the event that the Lead Agency finds that Tier 4 construction equipment is not feasible pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15364, the Project representative or contractor must demonstrate

¹¹ South Coast AQMD. Localized Significance Thresholds. Accessed at: <http://www.aqmd.gov/home/regulations/ceqa/air-quality-analysis-handbook/localized-significance-thresholds>.

through future study with written findings supported by substantial evidence that is reviewed and approved by the Lead Agency before using other technologies/strategies. Alternative applicable strategies may include, but would not be limited to, Tier 3 construction equipment, reduction in the number and/or horsepower rating of construction equipment, limiting the number of daily construction haul truck trips to and from the Proposed Project, and/or limiting the number of individual construction project phases occurring simultaneously, if applicable.

- Maintain equipment maintenance records for the construction portion of the Proposed Project. All construction equipment must be tuned and maintained in compliance with the manufacturer's recommended maintenance schedule and specifications. All maintenance records for each equipment and their construction contractor(s) should be made available for inspection and remain on-site for a period of at least two years from completion of construction.
- Encourage construction contractors to apply for South Coast AQMD "SOON" funds. The "SOON" program provides funds to applicable fleets for the purchase of commercially-available low-emission heavy-duty engines to achieve near-term reduction of NOx emissions from in-use off-road diesel vehicles. More information on this program can be found at South Coast AQMD's website: <http://www.aqmd.gov/home/programs/business/business-detail?title=off-road-diesel-engines>.
- Require the use of zero-emissions or near-zero emission on-road haul trucks (e.g., material delivery trucks and soil import/export) such as heavy-duty trucks with natural gas engines that meet the CARB's adopted optional NOx emissions standard at 0.02 grams per brake horsepower-hour (g/bhp-hr). At a minimum, require that construction vendors, contractors, and/or haul truck operators commit to using 2010 model year or newer engines that meet CARB's 2010 engine emissions standards at 0.01 g/bhp-hr of particulate matter (PM) and 0.20 g/bhp-hr of NOx emissions or newer, cleaner trucks. Include analyses to evaluate and identify sufficient power available for zero emission trucks and supportive infrastructures in the Energy and Utilities and Service Systems Sections of the Final MND, where appropriate. Require that operators maintain records of all trucks associated with the Proposed Project's construction and make these records available to the Lead Agency upon request. The records will serve as evidence to prove that each truck called to the Proposed Project meets the minimum 2010 model year engine emission standards. The Lead Agency should conduct regular inspections of the records to the maximum extent feasible and practicable to ensure compliance with this mitigation measure.
- Restrict non-essential diesel engine idle time, to not more than five consecutive minutes or another time-frame as allowed by the California Code of Regulations, Title 13 section 2485 - CARB's Airborne Toxic Control Measure to Limit Diesel-Fueled Commercial Motor Vehicle Idling. For any vehicle delivery that is expected to take longer than five minutes, each project applicant, project sponsor, or public agency will require the vehicle's operator to shut off the engine. Notify the vendors of these idling requirements at the time that the purchase order is issued and again when vehicles enter the gates of the facility. To further ensure that drivers and operators understand the idling requirement, post signs at the entry of the construction site and throughout the Proposed Project site stating that idling longer than five minutes is not permitted.

Conclusion

Pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15074, prior to approving the Proposed Project, the Lead Agency shall consider the MND for adoption together with any comments received during the public review process. Please provide South Coast AQMD with written responses to all comments contained herein prior to the adoption of the Final MND. When responding to issues raised in the comments, responses

should provide sufficient details giving reasons why specific comments and suggestions are not accepted. There should be good faith, reasoned analysis in response. Conclusory statements unsupported by factual information do not facilitate the purpose and goal of CEQA on public disclosure and are not meaningful, informative, or useful to decision makers and the public who are interested in the Proposed Project. Further, if the Lead Agency makes a finding that additional recommended mitigation measures are not feasible, the Lead Agency should describe the specific reasons for rejecting or substituting these mitigation measures in the Final MND (CEQA Guidelines Section 15074.1).

South Coast AQMD staff is available to work with the Lead Agency to address any air quality questions that may arise from this comment letter. Please contact Alina Mullins, Assistant Air Quality Specialist, at amullins@aqmd.gov or (909) 396-2402, should you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Lijin Sun

Lijin Sun, J.D.

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Planning, Rule Development & Area Sources

LS:AM
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