



NOTICE OF AVAILABILITY OF PROPOSED THRESHOLD OF SIGNIFICANCE FOR VEHICLE MILES TRAVELED (VMT) PURSUANT TO THE CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY ACT (CEQA)

DATE POSTED: MARCH 28, 2019

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the City of Corona seeks to develop a threshold of significance under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to State CEQA Guidelines §15064.7. The proposed threshold of significance addresses Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) which the city will use in determining a project's significant effect on the environment relating to transportation impacts. The VMT threshold will be used for projects that require environmental analysis by CEQA.

Senate Bill (SB) 743 was signed by the Governor in 2013 and changed the way transportation impacts are measured under CEQA. SB 743 required public agencies to transition from using vehicle level of service (LOS) to vehicle miles traveled (VMT) under CEQA when evaluating a project's transportation impact on the environment. The legislation also directed the Governor's Office of Planning and Research (OPR) to look at different metrics for identifying transportation as a CEQA impact, and in November 2017, OPR identified VMT as the preferred metric. The State's CEQA Guidelines were updated to reflect the change required by SB 743, and on December 28, 2018, the Office of Administrative Law approved a comprehensive update to the Guidelines. Public agencies must adopt the newly approved amendments to the State CEQA Guidelines no later than 120 days after the effective date of the Guideline amendments.

Public agencies have until July 1, 2020 to adopt the actual VMT threshold of significance. Given the timing of this implementation with the city's preparation of the General Plan Technical Update, it is prudent for the city to address VMT prior to July 1, 2020, so that the city's transportation analysis in the General Plan Update is consistent with state law.

Public Review and Comment: The City has developed a proposed threshold of significance for VMT. Per CEQA Guidelines §15064.7(b), a threshold of significance to be adopted for general use as part of the city's environmental review process must be adopted through the public review process by ordinance, resolution, rule or regulation. Interested persons can review the proposed threshold of significance and supporting information at <https://www.coronaca.gov/government/departments/community-development/planning-division> and at City Hall, Community Development Department, 400 S. Vicentia Avenue, Corona, CA 92882.

The Public comment period on the proposed VMT threshold of significance will close on April 24, 2019 at 6:00 p.m. Written comments can be submitted to:

Joanne Coletta, Community Development Director
Corona City Hall
400 S. Vicentia Avenue
Corona, CA 92882
Or submitted via email to joanne.coletta@coronaca.gov

Informational Meeting: The threshold of significance for VMT will be discussed at the City Council study session on April 24, 2019, starting at 3:30 p.m. The location is the City Council Chambers at 400 S. Vicentia Avenue, Corona, CA 92882.

BACKGROUND SUMMARY ON PROPOSED THRESHOLD OF SIGNIFICANCE RELATED TO VMT

What is a CEQA threshold of significance?

A threshold of significance is an identifiable quantitative, qualitative, or performance level of a particular environmental effect, non-compliance with which means the effect will normally be determined to be significant by the agency, and compliance with which means the effect normally will be determined to be less than significant (State CEQA Guidelines §15064.7(a)).

What threshold of significance is being proposed?

One of the most significant revisions to the State CEQA Guidelines concerns a change in how transportation impacts must be analyzed under CEQA. A new section has been added to the State CEQA Guidelines, Section 15064.3, that provides that “vehicle miles traveled,” or VMT, shall be the most appropriate measure of transportation impacts. VMT refers to the amount and distance of automobile travel attributable to a project.

The City proposes the following threshold of significance for use as part of the City’s future environmental review process under CEQA:

Transportation/Traffic:

Would the project increase the total daily vehicle miles traveled per service population (population plus employment) (VMT/SP) above the baseline level for the jurisdiction?

Would the project cause total daily VMT within the study area to be higher than the *No Project* alternative under cumulative conditions?

This proposed threshold would be implemented as part of the City’s Local Guidelines for Implementing the California Environmental Quality Act. Any initial study prepared for a proposed project would consider and address the above threshold of significance, in addition to the other questions presented in the initial study checklist. If the City answers the threshold question in the affirmative, it would normally be determined that the proposed project would have a significant impact on the environment. An EIR would normally be required pursuant to CEQA if the impact cannot be mitigated to a level that would reduce the impact to a less than significant.

Why develop this threshold?

Under §15064.3 of the State CEQA Guidelines, VMT shall replace a proposed project’s effect on automobile delay—generally measured by “level of service” or LOS—as the appropriate measure for transportation impacts. Moreover, a project’s effect on automobile delay shall no longer constitute a significant transportation environmental impact under CEQA. Accordingly, a project that makes traffic congestion worse but will not result in significant VMT will not be considered to have a significant environmental impact, and a project with no effect on congestion but with a significant VMT impact will normally be considered to have a significant environmental impact under Section 15064.3.