

CITY OF SANTA ROSA  
BICYCLE AND PEDESTRIAN ADVISORY BOARD  
STAFF REPORT  
January 16, 2020

**SUBJECT**

*Vehicle Miles Travelled (VMT) – California  
Environmental Quality Act (CEQA)*

**ISSUE**

Staff to present report on Vehicle Miles Travelled Miles (VMT) which will become a CEQA requirement on July 1, 2020.

**STAFF PRESENTER**

*Nancy Adams*

**RECOMMENDATION**

For information only. No action required.

**BACKGROUND**

Jurisdictional General Plans provide guidance on and set policies regarding the evaluation of transportation impacts under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). A significant change in CEQA practice is being triggered by the implementation of Senate Bill (SB) 743. SB 743 removes the use of automobile delay or traffic congestion for determining transportation impacts in environmental review. Instead, the CEQA Guidelines now specify that Vehicle Miles Traveled, or VMT, is the appropriate metric to evaluate transportation impacts. To comply with these new rules, the jurisdictions will need to define policies and practices for conducting VMT analysis in areas under their jurisdiction.

Under CEQA, lead agencies must determine whether a proposed project has the potential to cause significant environmental impacts. This determination must be based, to the extent possible, on factual data and scientific methods of analysis. The project's effect on transportation is one of the areas that must be analyzed. Jurisdictions have typically used vehicle Level of Service (LOS) as the primary measure of a project's transportation impacts.

In September 2013, the legislature passed, and Governor Jerry Brown signed into law SB 743, initiating a process intended to fundamentally change transportation impact analysis under CEQA. One major change resulting from the statute is the elimination of automobile delay or other similar measures of traffic congestion as a basis for determining significant impacts. According to the legislative intent contained in SB 743, these changes to current practice are intended to "more appropriately balance the needs of congestion management with statewide goals related to infill development, promotion of public health through active transportation, and reduction of greenhouse gas emissions."

## **ANALYSIS**

1. As of December 2018, Office of Planning (OPR) completed an update to the CEQA Guidelines to implement the requirements of SB 743. The Guidelines state that VMT must be the metric used to determine significant transportation impacts. This requirement will apply statewide effective July 1, 2020; lead agencies can opt in sooner at their own discretion.
2. The Sonoma County Transportation Authority (SCTA) hired a consultant team which has been working on the calibration of the travel model, completing a travel behavior study and preparing technical reports related to SB 743 and VMT.
3. Staff has been working directly with SCTA to review City of Santa Rosa information related to VMT and to the thresholds, screening criteria and mitigation measures.
4. Traffic Engineering staff is working with the Planning and Economic Development (PED) Department and the City Attorney's Office to develop thresholds, screening criteria and VMT reduction and mitigation measures.
5. In addition, the City is currently launching an update of the General Plan which will include an evaluation of the VMT requirement. Attachments 1 and 2 provide draft VMT information and maps for Santa Rosa.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

For information only. No action required.

Attachment 1: VMT Information Santa Rosa and Sonoma County  
Attachment 2: VMT Maps for Santa Rosa