



South Coast Air Quality Management District

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SDU-4

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Review of the Draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the Mid County Parkway Project

The South Coast Air Quality Management District (SCAQMD) staff appreciates the opportunity to comment on the above mentioned document. The SCAQMD staff is concerned that the Draft EIR provides an air quality analysis for the proposed project that is not adequate to determine potential air quality impacts pursuant to SCAQMD Guidance and CEQA Guidelines. As a result, the air quality impacts may be understated in the Draft EIR and potentially significant impacts may not have been disclosed to the public.

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There are several areas in which the Draft EIR has not addressed the potential for air quality impacts. These include the project's regional construction air quality impacts, climate change impacts, and growth inducing impacts, and the lack of quantification of mitigation measure effectiveness. Because of the technical inadequacies of the Draft EIR the SCAQMD staff recommends that the lead agency revise the air quality analysis based on the comments contained within this letter.

Pursuant to Public Resources Code Section 21092.5, we request that the lead agency provide the SCAQMD with written responses to all comments contained herein prior to the adoption of the final EIR. Additional detailed comments on this project are attached to this letter. Should you have any questions, please contact Dan Garcia at (909) 396-3304.

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Sincerely,

Ian MacMillan

Program Supervisor, CEQA Inter-Governmental Review
Planning, Rule Development & Area Sources

Attachment

IM:DG

RVC130124-02

Control Number

1. Construction Emissions Analysis

The peak daily construction emissions presented in Table 3.14W of the Draft EIR demonstrate significant NOx emissions impacts from the project in comparison to SCAQMD regional thresholds; however, the lead agency determined that the proposed project will have insignificant impacts from construction related activities. Specifically, the lead agency concluded that the project's construction emissions would be less than significant as a result of the project's construction activity combined with the implementation of air quality measures AQ-1 through AQ-5. However, the lead agency did not quantify the effectiveness of the air quality measures or substantiate why its strategy to reduce construction emissions results in insignificant air quality impacts. Therefore, SCAQMD staff recommends that the lead agency provide a revised air quality analysis that quantifies the effectiveness of the project's air quality measures (AQ-1 through AQ-5) and uses the SCAQMD's construction emissions thresholds to make a significance determination.¹

Further, given that construction activity for the project may result in a temporary increase of traffic congestion (as stated on page 3.14-41 of the Draft EIR) the SCAQMD staff recommends that the lead agency's revised analysis account for any emissions increase resulting from this congestion in the construction emissions analysis. Also, the lead agency's revised emissions analysis should reflect the most current version of RoadMod 7.1.1.

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2. Climate Change Impacts

On page 62 of the Air Quality Appendix of the Draft EIR, the lead agency states, "... it is RCTC's determination, that in the absence of regulatory or scientific information related to greenhouse gas emissions and CEQA significance, it is too speculative to make a determination of the project's direct impact and its contribution on the cumulative scale to climate change." Based on Section 15064 and 15064.4 of the CEQA Guidelines the SCAQMD staff disagrees with this conclusion. Specifically, SCAQMD staff refers the lead agency to Section 15064.4(a) that states, "The determination of the significance of greenhouse gas emissions calls for careful judgment by the lead agency consistent with the provisions in 15064." Section 15064(g) of the CEQA Guidelines provides further clarification on the inadequacy of the GHG determination mentioned above by stating "...If there is disagreement among expert opinion supported by facts over the significance of an effect on the environment, the Lead Agency shall treat the effect as significant and shall prepare an EIR." Therefore, SCAQMD staff requests that since the lead agency is unable to determine if GHG emissions are significant it should revise the project's greenhouse gas emissions analysis to include a determination of significance, and consider all feasible mitigation measures to reduce this impact.

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3. Growth Inducing Impacts

On page 14 of the Air Quality Appendix for the Draft EIR the lead agency concludes that the project will not have any growth inducing effects. Specifically, the lead agency states that implementation of the project was included and analyzed in the Riverside County General Plan and therefore would not result in unplanned growth. However, the lead agency does not provide any quantitative information or analyses to ensure insignificant growth inducing impacts from the project. Therefore, the lead agency should clarify how the future traffic volumes were determined (2020 horizon year and 2040 build-out year) and demonstrate how these volumes are consistent with the adopted general plan. Any growth inducing impacts

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¹ <http://www.aqmd.gov/ceqa/hdbk.html>

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from potential project alternatives should be analyzed pursuant to CEQA Guidelines §15126
(d) prior to approving the Final EIR.



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