

4.10 TRANSPORTATION

This section analyzes transportation impacts of the proposed Parks Master Plan (Project) based on a review of existing city plans and studies. This section also draws from the City of Santa Cruz General Plan 2030 EIR (SCH#2009032007), which was certified on June 26, 2012, regarding background information on regulatory setting and sensitive habitats. The General Plan EIR is incorporated by reference in accordance with section 15150 of the State CEQA Guidelines. Relevant discussions are summarized in subsection 4.3.1. The General Plan EIR is available for review at the City of Santa Cruz Planning and Community Development Department (809 Center Street, Room 101, Santa Cruz, California) during business hours: Monday through Thursday, 7:30 AM to 12 PM and 1 PM to 3 PM. The General Plan EIR is also available online on the City’s website at:

<http://www.cityofsantacruz.com/Home/Components/BusinessDirectory/BusinessDirectory/102/1775>.

Public and agency comments related to transportation were received during the public scoping period in response to the Notice of Preparation (NOP). Issues raised in these comments include:

- Caltrans supports local development that is consistent with State planning priorities.
- Work in the State’s right-of-way will require an encroachment permit from Caltrans.

To the extent that issues identified in public comments involve potentially significant effects on the environment according to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and/or are raised by responsible agencies, they are identified and addressed within this EIR. Public comments received during the public scoping period are included in Appendix A.

4.10.1 Environmental Setting

Regulatory Setting

A number of local, regional and state agencies are involved with transportation planning and implementation of transportation programs and improvements within the City of Santa Cruz. The City maintains local roadways and transportation facilities. The California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) has jurisdiction over State highway segments that traverse the City, including portions of Highways 1, 9, and 17. To address roadway and intersection improvements needed as a result of impacts of new development, the City has developed a “Traffic Impact Fee” (TIF) program. The TIF is applied to new development and redevelopment and is collected at the time of issuance of building permits (see discussion below in the “Planned Transportation Improvements” subsection for more details). The City also is active in acquiring transportation funding from federal, state, and local sources.

Other local and regional agencies responsible for transportation services and/or transportation planning are summarized below.

- ❑ *The Association of Monterey Bay Area Governments (AMBAG)* is the federally designated Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for transportation planning activities in the tri-county Monterey Bay region (Santa Cruz, Monterey and San Benito counties). It is the lead agency responsible for developing and administering plans and programs to maintain eligibility and receive federal funds for the transportation systems in the region. AMBAG conducts regional transportation planning activities through its Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP), the Metropolitan Transportation Improvement Program (MTIP), maintenance of a regional travel demand model and demographic forecasts. AMBAG works with regional transportation planning agencies, transit providers, the Monterey Bay Unified Air Pollution Control District (MBUAPCD), state and federal governments, and organizations having interest in or responsibility for transportation planning and programming.
- ❑ *The Santa Cruz Regional Transportation Commission (SCCRTC)* is the State designated Regional Transportation Planning Authority (RTPA) for transportation planning activities in Santa Cruz County. SCCRTC oversees planning and funding programs for local and countywide projects within Santa Cruz County using state and federal transportation funds. The City of Santa Cruz has one City representative on the 12-member SCCRTC board, and some City transportation projects are funded through grant programs administered by the SCCRTC.
- ❑ *The Santa Cruz Metropolitan Transit District (SCMTD)* provides transit services throughout Santa Cruz County.

Roadway Network

Local Roadways

The City's road system consists of arterial highways and arterial, collector and local streets. These different classifications relate to different transportation functions and are classified in terms of access, mobility, design and use. Additionally, visitor/coastal access and truck routes have been designated to facilitate the movement of visitor traffic and commodities.

Highways and arterial streets carry the City's heaviest traffic flows and provide regional and inter-community access. State highways through the City are described in the following section. Major arterial streets within the City include:

- Ocean Street (the primary north-south arterial);
- Mission Street, Water Street, Soquel Avenue, and Broadway Avenue-Laurel Street (the primary east-west arterials);
- Other designated arterial streets include Bay Street, Delaware Avenue, Morrissey Blvd., Murray Street-San Lorenzo Blvd., Seabright Avenue, Market Street, Beach Street, Second Street, Front Street, Pacific Avenue, Cedar Avenue, Center Street, Walnut Street, River Street, and High Street.

Collector streets provide circulation within and between neighborhoods and commercial and industrial areas. These streets usually serve relatively short trips and are meant to collect traffic from

local streets and distribute them to the arterial network. Examples of collector streets include California Street, Chestnut Street, Escalona Drive, Fairmount Street, Frederick Street, King Street, Swift Street, and West Cliff Drive.

Local streets provide direct access to abutting land uses, collectors, or arterials, and usually do not accommodate bus routes.

Visitor/coastal access routes are intended to be inviting to visitors and to provide convenient, clear access to and from visitor and coastal destinations. Highways 1 and 17, Ocean Street, and Mission Street are key visitor routes into Santa Cruz and the City's beach areas. West Cliff Drive also provides a scenic route along the coast.

Truck routes are intended to channel trucks through the community and away from residential and other areas where they would be a nuisance. The truck routes in the City are Highway 1 – Mission Street, Highway 17, Bay Street north of Mission, Empire Grade west of Bay, Highway 9, Morrissey Boulevard, and Soquel Avenue.

State Highways

State highways that go through the City of Santa Cruz include segments of Highways 1, 17, and 9. Though referenced as “state routes” in Caltrans documents, the more common term, “highway”, is used in this EIR. Highways 1 and 17 serve regional traffic, including motorists who commute to jobs in the Santa Clara Valley and motorists who travel into Santa Cruz County for recreational opportunities offered in the county. A short segment of Highway 9 also is within city limits.

Highway 1 provides access to San Francisco to the north and Monterey to the south. Regionally, Highway 1 is the major inter- and intra-county route for Santa Cruz County. Within the City of Santa Cruz, it is oriented in an east-west direction, although the interregional alignment of Highway 1 is primarily north-south. It is a four-lane arterial along Mission Street from the west side of Santa Cruz to Chestnut Street Extension, a four-lane expressway between Mission Street-Chestnut Street and River Street, and a four-lane freeway east of River Street. The speed limit on Highway 1 is 25 miles per hour (mph) along Mission Street, 45 mph along the expressway section, and 55 and 65 mph on the freeway sections further east. Recurrent congestion results in queuing on Highway 1 that extends for several miles during peak hours. Accidents, events, and other incidents in the corridor can further increase congestion related delays in either direction, on any day, including weekends.

Highway 9 is a two-lane state highway that connects the City of Santa Cruz with the San Lorenzo Valley, and eventually, Saratoga and Los Gatos. Approximately 0.5 miles of Route 9 are located within Santa Cruz city limits.

Highway 17 connects Santa Cruz with Scotts Valley and San Jose and other Santa Clara County communities. It is a four-lane freeway north of the Highway 1/ Highway 9 intersection. Highway 17 is the primary route between the Santa Clara Valley and Santa Cruz County that serves as both a

commuter route for Santa Cruz County residents that work in Santa Clara County and for recreational visitors that come to Cruz County. Congestion occurs both during weekday commute times and on summer weekends. This winding, four-lane road has steep sections, frequent road crossings, and substandard median shoulders and outside shoulders for most of its length. In addition to the challenging roadway configuration, weather-related conditions such as thick fog, heavy rains and mudslides affect roadway operations.

Vehicle Miles Traveled

In September 2013, Governor Brown signed Senate Bill 743 which made significant changes to how transportation impacts are to be assessed under CEQA. SB 743 directs the Governor’s Office of Planning and Research (OPR) to develop a new metric to replace LOS as a measure of impact significance and suggests vehicle miles traveled (VMT) as that metric. One vehicle (regardless of the number of passengers) traveling one mile constitutes one “vehicle mile” (Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission, 2018). SB 743 also creates a new CEQA exemption for certain projects that are consistent with the regional Sustainable Communities Strategy.

The State CEQA Guidelines, which were amended at the end of 2018 and went into effect in 2019, include a new section 15064.3 regarding analysis of transportation impacts. This section indicates that “generally, VMT is the most appropriate measure of transportation impacts.” For the purposes of this section, “vehicle miles traveled” refers to the amount and distance of automobile travel attributable to a project. Other relevant considerations may include the effects of the project on transit and non-motorized travel. The section further indicates that “except as provided in subdivision (b)(2) below (regarding roadway capacity), a project’s effect on automobile delay shall not constitute a significant environmental impact.”

A lead agency has discretion to choose the most appropriate methodology to evaluate a project’s VMT, including whether to express the change in absolute terms, per capita, per household or in any other measure. A lead agency may use models to estimate a project’s VMT and may revise those estimates to reflect professional judgment based on substantial evidence. A lead agency may elect to be governed by the provisions at the time of the amended CEQA Guidelines, however, beginning on July 1, 2020, the provisions shall apply statewide. The City of Santa Cruz is in the process of developing a VMT threshold, but has not yet adopted one and has until July 1, 2020 to do so. Technical guidelines published by the California Office of Planning and Research indicate that a per capita or per employee VMT that is 15 percent below that of existing development may be a reasonable threshold based on reductions needed to meet targeted greenhouse gas emissions reductions, and below these levels, a project could be considered to have a low VMT (California Office of Planning and Research, December 2018). Furthermore, according to these guidelines residential development that would generate vehicle travel that is 15 or more percent below the existing residential VMT per capita, measured against the region or city, may indicate a less-than-significant transportation impact.

According to the SCCRTC, VMT per capita within Santa Cruz County is estimated to decrease by 17% from approximately 15.3 to approximately 12.5 between 2005 and 2035 (Santa Cruz County Regional

Transportation Commission, 2018). Furthermore, preliminary reviews by the City indicates that residential development in the city of Santa Cruz generates VMT per capita more than 15 percent lower than the County average per capita VMT per the California Travel Model. Based on the California Travel Model, the City's VMT residential per capita is 11.04 compared to the County per capita VMT of 15.41. The City per capita figure is 28 percent less than the County figure, which would indicate that the City's per capita VMT is low compared to the region. The City's employee per capita VMT is 20.06 compared to the County's employee per capita VMT of 22.09, which is about 9 percent lower than the County employee per capita VMT.

Bicycle and Pedestrian Circulation

The City of Santa Cruz has high percentages of its population that commute by walking and bicycling; approximately, 10 percent of the City's population walked and bicycled between 2011-2014 as compared to the state averages of 2.7 and 1.1 percent, respectively. Rates of cycling in the City have more than doubled since the 2008 Bicycle Transportation Plan, where Census data from 2000 showed that 4.7 percent of the population commuted by bike (City of Santa Cruz, February 2017).

The City of Santa Cruz' bicycle system is comprised of off-street multi-use paths (Class I), on-street bicycle lanes (Class II) and on-street bicycle routes (Class III). Class I and Class II bike facilities. In 2017, the City started a bike share program with electric bikes that currently offers approximately 550 bikes for public use. Bicycle support facilities include different classes of bicycle parking facilities, which are required by City zoning code regulations, and shower facilities at major employment facilities. Future planning for bike and pedestrian infrastructure projects is guided by the City of Santa Cruz Active Transportation Plan (2017). All of the SCMTD buses are equipped with front-mounted bicycle racks capable of carrying three bicycles. The University of California operates a bike shuttle near the intersection of Bay/Mission Streets to transport bicycles to the University. The City has approximately 135 miles of sidewalks.

Public Transit

Transit service within Santa Cruz County is primarily provided by the Santa Cruz Metropolitan Transit District (SCMTD). Regional bus routes provide service to destinations in Santa Clara and Monterey Counties including daily weekday service via Highway 17 by the SCMTD. SCMTD buses provide service from the downtown Santa Cruz transit center to the San Jose Caltrain station, with connections to San Francisco, Sacramento, Stockton and other cities. Greyhound bus service also is provided from Downtown Santa Cruz to select destinations.

In addition to the SCMTD transit services, a Downtown Trolley service has been in operation since 2012 and provides service between the Downtown and the Wharf/Beach areas weekends and holidays between Memorial Day and Labor Day. The shuttle operates on 30-minute headways in either direction. The City of Santa Cruz received a grant from the Monterey Bay Air Resources District in 2018 to purchase two electric shuttles and will be launching an all-electric shuttle program in the summer of 2020. The trollies will provide service between downtown Santa Cruz and the Main Beach

on weekends and holidays during the summer. The service is sponsored by the Downtown Association and numerous businesses and organizations.

Rail Service

The former Union Pacific Railroad rail line forms a continuous, single-track, 32-mile corridor from Davenport to the City of Watsonville. The Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission (RTC) finalized purchase of the right-of-way in October 2012. The Santa Cruz County RTC selected the Santa Cruz and Monterey Bay Railway to operate freight and potential future passenger rail service along the corridor. The St. Paul & Pacific Railroad Co. LLC, a subsidiary of Progressive Rail Incorporated, began operating on the Santa Cruz Branch Rail Line on August 16, 2018.

The Santa Cruz Big Trees and Pacific Railway Company operates a tourist-oriented passenger service between Felton and the Santa Cruz Beach Boardwalk on its nine-mile track line from Santa Cruz to its current terminus at Roaring Camp. The service is provided daily during mid-June through the end of August, and weekends and holidays in May, early June, September through October, late November, and December. The trains run twice in each direction every day during regular operations and use the tracks that cross Pacific Avenue just north of the intersection of Pacific Avenue and Beach Street.

4.10.2 Impacts and Mitigation Measures

Thresholds of Significance

In accordance with CEQA; State CEQA Guidelines (including Appendix G); City of Santa Cruz plans, policies, and/or guidelines; and agency and professional standards; a project impact would be considered significant if the project would:

- TRANS-1 Conflict with a program, plan, ordinance, or policy addressing the circulation system, including transit, roadways, bicycle, and pedestrian facilities;
- TRANS-2 Conflict or be inconsistent with CEQA Guidelines Section 15064.3, subdivision (b);
- TRANS-3 Substantially increase hazards due to a geometric design feature (e.g., sharp curves or dangerous intersections) or incompatible uses (e.g., farm equipment); or
- TRANS-4 Result in inadequate emergency access.

Impacts and Mitigation Measures

Areas of No Project Impact

- TRANS-2 *Conflict with State CEQA Guidelines Section 15064.3 - Vehicle Miles Traveled.* CEQA Guidelines section 15064.3, subdivision (b) codifies the switch from LOS to vehicle miles traveled (VMT) as the metric for transportation impact analysis pursuant to state legislation adopted in 2013. CEQA Guidelines section 15064.3(b) indicates that

development projects that exceed an applicable VMT threshold of significance may indicate a significant impact. Generally, projects within one-half mile of either an existing major transit stop or a stop along an existing high-quality transit corridor should be presumed to cause a less than significant transportation impact. Projects that decrease vehicle miles traveled in the project area compared to existing conditions should be presumed to have a less than significant transportation impact. If existing models or methods are not available to estimate the vehicle miles traveled for the particular project being considered, a lead agency may analyze the project's vehicle miles traveled qualitatively. Such a qualitative analysis would evaluate factors such as the availability of transit, proximity to other destinations, etc. For many projects, a qualitative analysis of construction traffic may be appropriate.

As previously indicated, the City of Santa Cruz is in the process of developing a VMT threshold, but has not yet adopted one and has until July 1, 2020 to do so. Thus, at the present time, the project would not conflict or be inconsistent with CEQA Guidelines section 15064.3.

The Project is a Parks Master Plan that includes recommendations for improvements to existing park and recreational facilities. The Project would not include residential, commercial or office uses that could increase vehicle miles traveled. None of the recommended improvements or new structural development would result in significant increased traffic volumes. Recommended park facility improvements are for ancillary features to serve existing parks. Many City parks and recreational facilities are accessible by non-vehicular travel modes.

Technical guidelines published by the California Office of Planning and Research indicate that overall per-capita vehicle travel would need to be approximately 14.3 percent lower than existing levels to meet targeted greenhouse gas emissions reductions, and below these levels, a project could be considered low VMT (California Office of Planning and Research, December 2018). Furthermore, residential development that would generate vehicle travel that is 15 or more percent below the existing residential VMT per capita, measured against the region or city, may indicate a less-than-significant transportation impact. Implementation of recommendations in the proposed Parks Master Plan would lead to improvements at existing parks that generally serve City residents. The City's per capita VMT is 28% lower than the County (regional), and therefore, is at a level that would be considered less-than-significant. Implementation of the proposed Parks Master Plan would not lead to new development that would increase VMT. Therefore, the project would not conflict or be inconsistent with CEQA Guidelines section 15064.3. Therefore, *no impact* would occur.

TRANS-3 *Geometric Design Hazards.* The Project would consist of improvements to existing park and recreational facilities. The Project would not include changes to existing roadway design or introduce incompatible uses. Therefore, *no impact* would occur.

TRANS-4 *Emergency Access.* The Project would consist of improvements to existing park and recreational facilities. The Project would not include changes to existing roadway design or introduce incompatible uses. Therefore, *no impact* would occur.

Project Impacts

Impact TRANS-1: Conflicts with Plans Addressing the Circulation System. The proposed Project would not conflict with a program, plan, ordinance, or policy addressing the circulation system, including transit, roadways, bicycle, and pedestrian facilities. Therefore, this is a *less-than-significant* impact.

The proposed Project consists of recommendations that could result in improvements to existing park and recreational facilities. Most of the improvements would be considered an upgrade or enhancement to an existing facility with the addition of amenities, landscaping, or minor improvements, such as benches, picnic and play areas, improved signage, and facility renovations. Expanded or upgraded playgrounds are recommended for consideration at five neighborhood parks (Central, Harvey West, Frederick Street, Garfield, Lighthouse Avenue, and Sgt. Derby Parks). Most of the recommendations in the Parks Master Plan would not result in new structural development.

New structural development recommendations include: potential restrooms at several facilities; permanent restroom and dressing room facilities the Audrey Stanley Grove amphitheater at DeLaveaga Park; potential addition of a caretaker residence at Pogonip; potential workshop and storage structure at the Wharf Yard (at Depot Park); and structural renovations at existing facilities (the Civic Auditorium, Loudon Nelson Community Center, and Pogonip clubhouse). No specific development is proposed as a part of the Parks Master Plan. Feasibility studies would be conducted for new or expanded parks and facilities before site plans are developed. Potential future trails would be considered after additional studies and routes are reviewed. No specific trail alignments are included in the Parks Master Plan.

None of the recommended improvements or new structural development would result in significant increased traffic volumes. Recommended improvements are for ancillary features to serve existing parks. Most City parks and recreational facilities are accessible by non-vehicular travel modes. Potential expanded use at the Audrey Stanley Grove amphitheater at DeLaveaga Park and San Lorenzo Park is expected to occur on weekends and/or during the day outside of weekday AM and PM peak hours for traffic and, thus, would not result in significant traffic increases that would conflict with a program, plan, ordinance, or policy addressing the circulation system.

Potential small parking lots at Lower DeLaveaga Park, Moore Creek Preserve, and Pogonip Open Space are identified for consideration in the Parks Master Plan. The introduction of new parking areas could result in an increase in traffic. However, future parking lots are expected to be relatively small with capacity of approximately 30 vehicles or less given the limited site availability in the areas where additional parking would be considered. This minor increase in parking would not be expected to

result in a substantial increase in peak hour traffic or conflict with plans or policies related to circulation.

The Parks Master Plan recommendation to consider developing a parking area off of Highway 1 to improve access to the Moore Creek Preserve does not provide a specific proposal in terms of size, layout or driveway location. Further study and design would be necessary should the City decide to propose a parking area in the future. The Parks Master Plan also acknowledges that recommendations in the Plan are conceptual and further study would be needed once specific improvements are proposed, sited and designed.

As previously indicated, the City of Santa Cruz has high percentages of its population that commute by walking and bicycling, which indicates a need and high demand beyond recreation for pedestrian and bike routes and trails. The Parks Master Plan recognizes that an increasingly urban population relies on public transportation and alternative means of transit, such as bicycles, as a primary mode of transport. Goal VI of the Parks Master Plan, Connectivity and Access, notes that national trends indicate a move towards more interconnected park systems, and a greater emphasis on pedestrian and bicycle pathways also aligns with national trends indicating an increase in the popularity of health and fitness recreation. It is also noted that Goal VI supports an integrated park system that in part provides a means for alternative transportation, and Policy A, Action 7 of this goal supports a Felton-Santa Cruz recreational trail and transportation/commuter corridor. Thus, the Project supports and is consistent with City General Plan policies that support alternative modes of transportation. Therefore, potential indirect project impacts related to transportation or traffic resulting from future improvements and/or expanded uses would not result in potential conflicts with plans and policies regarding the City's circulation system are considered *less than significant*.

Mitigation Measures

No mitigation measures are required as a significant impact has not been identified.

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