

3.1.2 Growth

Regulatory Setting

The Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations, which established the steps necessary to comply with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969, require evaluation of the potential environmental effects of all proposed federal activities and programs. This provision includes a requirement to examine indirect effects, which may occur in areas beyond the immediate influence of a proposed action and at some time in the future. The CEQ regulations (40 *Code of Federal Regulations* [CFR] 1508.8) refer to these consequences as indirect impacts. Indirect impacts may include changes in land use, economic vitality, and population density, which are all elements of growth.

The California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) also requires the analysis of a project's potential to induce growth. CEQA guidelines (Section 15126.2[d]) require that environmental documents "...discuss the ways in which the proposed project could foster economic or population growth, or the construction of additional housing, either directly or indirectly, in the surrounding environment..."

Affected Environment

This section uses information from the *Draft Growth-Related, Indirect Impact Analysis Report* (May 2014), which will serve as an attachment to the Community Impact Assessment (CIA).

Study Area Boundaries and Timeframe

The study area boundary is defined by the project's sphere of influence as it is related to growth impacts. The HDC Project is likely to influence residential growth up to 5 miles from its proposed highway interchanges and intersections, and to influence highway commercial and industrial development up to 2 miles from the interchanges. The proposed high-speed passenger rail stations in Palmdale and Victorville are likely to influence higher-density mixed-use development within walking distance of the stations, up to 0.25 and 0.5 mile away. Indirect impacts are evaluated within the time limits of the project construction and design years. It is anticipated that the project would be open to traffic by 2020, with 2040 as the design year.

Study Area Communities

As shown in Table 1-4, all affected major cities within the study area (Palmdale and Lancaster in Antelope Valley and Victorville, Apple Valley, Hesperia, and Adelanto in Victor Valley) have experienced rapid population growth over the past several years. Indications are strong that residential growth will continue due in part to the relatively low housing prices compared to other urbanized areas in Los Angeles County.

The Antelope Valley cities increased in population from 60,304 to approximately 309,383 from 1980 to 2010. Palmdale's major employment sources are the aerospace industry and other major corporations and industries. Within the area of the proposed HDC alignment, most of the industrial land uses are located near the Palmdale

Regional Airport. Highway commercial uses extend east along Palmdale Boulevard (SR-138) from SR-14. There is a potential for manufacturing companies to continue locating to Palmdale as a result of land affordability, proximity to major transportation hubs, and comparably low taxes. In addition, the California High-Speed Rail Authority has initiated preliminary development work on a north-south corridor through the Antelope Valley with segments proposed from Bakersfield to Palmdale and Palmdale to Los Angeles.

The unincorporated study area lands are characterized by a very low-density population pattern and sparse employment opportunities. Lake Los Angeles (population 12,328) and Phelan (population 14,304) are the only communities characterized by the 2010 census as “places.” The remaining unincorporated communities generally have fewer than 2,000 residents.

The Victor Valley cities³ increased in population from 14,220 to approximately 306,976 from 1980 to 2010. The largest single employment concentration in Victor Valley is the SCLA in Victorville at the site of the former George Air Force Base. The City of Adelanto, as the smallest city in San Bernardino County, almost tripled in population between 1990 and 2010. Low land and housing prices in Adelanto have contributed to growth. Adelanto is home to the Adelanto Gateway Logistics Center, which is a 400-acre industrial project across from the SCLA, and home to some of the largest manufacturing businesses in the Victor Valley region. In the Town of Apple Valley, the largest percentage of developed land is single-family residential. The North Apple Valley Industrial Specific Plan Area at Apple Valley Airport is generally flat, vacant, and has few constraints making it suitable for a wide range of industrial, commercial, institutional, office, and airport-related uses.

Environmental Consequences

The Caltrans *Guideline for Preparers of Growth-related, Indirect Impact Analysis* provides guidance for conducting growth-related, indirect impact analysis. The potential for the project to influence growth is based on factors that include project’s accessibility, type of facility, and project location, as well as growth pressure. To determine the project’s influence on growth, a two-phase approach was used to evaluate growth-related impacts. The first phase was a *first-cut screening*, which estimated the likely growth-potential effect and whether further analysis would be necessary. If growth is reasonably foreseeable, then further analysis is required to determine the effect of this growth on resources of concern.

First-Cut Screening Analysis

The first-cut screening analysis for the build alternatives was done by answering the following key questions outlined in the Guidance.

- How, if at all, does the project potentially change accessibility?

³ It is noted that the Town of Apple Valley and the City of Adelanto were not incorporated in 1980.

- How, if at all, do the project type, project location, and growth-pressure potentially influence growth?
- Determine whether project-related growth is “reasonably foreseeable.”
- If there is project-related growth, how, if at all, will that impact resources of concern?

Based on the first phase screening, there is a potential for the project to affect accessibility, influence growth, and impact resources of concern; therefore, a further analysis of the project’s growth-related impact was conducted and documented in the *Growth-Related, Indirect Impact Analysis Report* (May 2014).

Growth-Related Impact Analysis

The following steps were used as guidelines for identifying and assessing growth-related impacts of the HDC Project:

- Review previous project information and decide on the approach and level of effort needed for the analysis (“right-size” the analysis).
- Identify the potential for growth for each alternative.
- Assess the growth-related effects of each alternative to resources of concern.
- Consider additional opportunities to avoid and minimize growth-related impacts.
- Compare the results of the analysis for all alternatives.
- Document the process and findings of the analysis.

A combination of analysis methodologies was employed to assess growth effects. A study was conducted of travel time savings that the project would provide to major job centers. Potential changes in land use were studied with the aid of local and regional plans. SCAG data on growth projections for the area were also considered. Lastly, a Delphi Expert Panel was established to assist in estimating the locations and quantity of development that may occur as an indirect effect of the project build alternatives. A detailed analysis and discussion of each step can be found in the *Growth-Related, Indirect Impact Analysis Report* (May 2014), prepared for this project.

No Build Alternative.

The No Build Alternative would not lead to any physical improvements that may induce growth or development in the surrounding area. The existing local roadway and regional highway system would operate at its current level of efficiency, and congested conditions would remain and become worse over time. No growth-related impacts are expected.

Build Alternatives

Based on the results of analysis, the project would not likely cause extensive development at proposed interchanges located in the rural central portion of the alignment corridor. The project alternatives, either with or without a rail component, would tend to shift some future development toward the new interchanges in Palmdale and Victorville/Adelanto.

Freeway/Expressway Alternative

The highway-only project alternatives are not expected to attract new growth beyond that forecasted and planned by local jurisdictions. Most of this growth is expected at the eastern and western termini of the HDC in the Victor and Antelope valleys, respectively, with slightly more growth in the former. Some future highway-oriented development would be expected to shift toward the major project interchanges with State and Interstate highways. The proposed project would help address goals and policies of local general plans to attract investments to balance the current uneven supply of housing with more job-producing uses.

Freeway/Tollway Alternative

This alternative would follow the same physical alignment as the Freeway/Expressway Alternative (including Variations A, D, B, and E), but with the inclusion of tolled lanes. As a result, growth impacts are similar to the Freeway/Expressway Alternative; however, because some vehicle traffic would be expected to not use a toll facility, residential development could potentially follow a somewhat more dispersed pattern along the existing nontolled roadway network.

Freeway/Expressway Alternative with HSR Feeder Service

The alternatives with HSR would tend to foster higher density and mixed-use developments near the proposed rail stations in Palmdale and Victorville. Such density and land use changes would require changes to local planning designations and zoning ordinances. For example, in anticipation of the HDC Project, Victorville prepared a Specific Plan in 2009 for a new town called Desert Gateway with transit-oriented development mixed land uses near the proposed rail station and an HDC interchange. The proposed project would help address goals and policies of local general plans to attract investments to balance the current uneven supply of housing with more job-producing uses.

Freeway/Tollway Alternative with HSR Feeder Service

This alternative would be the same as the Freeway/Tollway Alternative (including Variations A, D, B, and E) and would include an HSR Feeder Service between Palmdale and Victorville. Growth impacts under this alternative are similar to the impacts discussed under the Freeway/Expressway Alternative with HSR Feeder Service.

The separate State-sponsored California HSR project extending from northern California to Los Angeles via a station at or near the Palmdale Transportation Center would have a transformational effect on growth, much greater than the impact of the HDC. The HSR project would make the High Desert region, especially Palmdale, easily accessible from the Los Angeles Basin – within less than 0.5 hour travel time on the HST compared to more than 1 hour by car and nearly 2 hours by Metrolink. This increased accessibility, and considering lower housing prices compared with the Los Angeles Basin, HSR should attract new residents to the Palmdale/Lancaster metropolitan area because commutes to jobs in the Los Angeles Basin and San Fernando Valley would be much quicker than under present conditions. Moreover,

this increased accessibility and substantial investment in public transportation infrastructure, coupled with lower land costs and increased market demand, would be expected to also attract new commercial, industrial, and other employment opportunities within the High Desert region, thus helping address the current housing/jobs imbalance. Also from a cumulative perspective, the rail alternatives for the HDC Project would facilitate connections into Palmdale for passengers on XpressWest, a privately proposed HSR project between Las Vegas and Victorville.

Avoidance, Minimization, and/or Mitigation Measures

The proposed project would not individually result in significant impacts due to growth. No avoidance, minimization, and/or mitigation measures are proposed.

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