

2017 Update of the Project Review Principles

Authority:

SMAQMD is the principal local authority charged with the responsibility for influencing public and private agency actions that could adversely impact air quality within the District.¹

Overview:

Ground level ozone and particulate matter are primary air quality health hazards in the Sacramento region. Additionally, greenhouse gas emissions (GHG) and the effects of a changing climate have become a global health concern. Mobile sources (cars, trucks, buses, and trains) dominate the ozone and GHG emissions inventories and are significant contributors of particulate matter.

New land use projects in Sacramento generate construction emissions from construction equipment and generate or attract vehicle trips when operational. The design of land use projects greatly influences not only operational emissions but also other factors that impact public health, such as physical activity levels, traffic injuries, and rates of crime and violence. Researchers are increasingly finding that land use and transportation patterns are root causes of the most prevalent causes of illness, disability, and death.²

Project Review Program:

SMAQMD, through its Land Use and Transportation Section, has established a Project Review Program to promote the development of land use and transportation projects that are effective in reducing emissions and advancing public health. Staff analyzes development proposals from a variety of lead agencies. Staff may recommend methods of analysis and tools for environmental review, provide design comments, suggest mitigation measures, or offer no comments. The Project Review Principles serve as guidelines when reviewing projects to ensure consistency in the comments and recommended mitigation measures where appropriate and applicable to development projects. The Project Review Principles are used with other guidance documents that inform the analysis of a project's potential air quality impacts and proposed mitigation measures. These documents include: SMAQMD Recommended Thresholds of Significance, Guide to Air Quality Assessment in Sacramento County (CEQA Guide), Recommended Guidance for Land Use Emission Reductions, and *Recommended Protocol for Evaluating the Location of Sensitive Land Uses Adjacent to Major Roadways* (Roadway Protocol). A short explanation of each of these documents follows.

SMAQMD Recommended Thresholds of Significance³

The SMAQMD Board adopted its current recommended significance thresholds for criteria pollutants on March 28, 2002 to assist in determining whether estimated project emissions will significantly impact the environment. Subsequently, GHG thresholds were adopted on October

¹ California Health and Safety Code §40961

² Frumkin H, Frank L, Jackson R. Urban Sprawl and Public Health: Designing, Planning and Building for Healthy Communities. Washington, DC: Island Press, 2004.

³ <http://www.airquality.org/ceqa/CH2ThresholdsTables5-2015.pdf>

23, 2014, and revised particulate matter thresholds were adopted on May 28, 2015. The recommended significance thresholds are compiled in the CEQA Guide thresholds table.⁴

Guide to Air Quality Assessment in Sacramento County⁵

The CEQA Guide provides detailed methodologies for the review of air quality impacts from development projects contemplated within the boundaries of SMAQMD. The primary purpose of the CEQA Guide is to provide a means for lead and reviewing agencies to identify analysis methods and tools for determining significant adverse impacts on air quality from proposed projects and provide recommended mitigation strategies for both short term (construction) and long term (operational) impacts.⁶

Projects that exceed the short-term construction thresholds must mitigate the air quality impact. The SMAQMD provides standard procedures for construction mitigation. Three levels of mitigation include Basic Construction Emissions Control Practices, Enhanced Exhaust Control Practices and Enhanced Fugitive Dust Control Practices. When the standard mitigation does not reduce the impact to below the thresholds, a mitigation fee is recommended.

Recommended Guidance for Land Use Emission Reductions⁷

Projects that exceed the long-term operational thresholds must mitigate the air quality impacts using all feasible mitigation. The SMAQMD recommends the project proponent develop an Air Quality Mitigation Plan (AQMP) for ozone precursors, describing how the project will reduce emissions by 15% for projects considered in the State Implementation Plan and by 35% for projects not considered in the State Implementation Plan. Particulate emissions may also need to be addressed in an AQMP. In addition, lead agencies require proponents to mitigate their projects' anticipated GHG if found to be significant. If the lead agency has not yet adopted a Climate Action Plan with which projects can demonstrate consistency, then the lead agency may require proponents to mitigate GHG on a project basis by creating a Greenhouse Gas Reduction Plan (GHGRP).

The SMAQMD's Recommended Guidance for Land Use Emission Reductions provides a description of the most current feasible operational mitigation measures and corresponding emissions reduction potential.

Roadway Protocol⁸

The Recommended Protocol for Evaluating the Location of Sensitive Land Uses Adjacent to Major Roadways (Roadway Protocol) provides guidance on how to assess and disclose potential cancer risk from exposure to diesel particulate matter from major roadways. The SMAQMD

⁴ <http://www.airquality.org/ceqa/CH2ThresholdsTables5-2015.pdf>

⁵ <http://www.airquality.org/ceqa/ceqaguideupdate.shtml>

⁶ <http://www.airquality.org/ceqa/mitigation.shtml>

⁷ <http://www.airquality.org/ceqa/RecommendedGuidanceLandUseEmissionReductions.pdf>

⁸ <http://www.airquality.org/ceqa/RoadwayProtocol.shtml>

Board approved major revisions to the Protocol and its Technical Appendix on October 23, 2008.

The proposed 2017 updated Project Review Principles follow, including seven principles and an overall principle.

Overall Principle

In reviewing land use and transportation projects, SMAQMD staff promotes clean air and public health through improvements in the built environment.

1. Design for and encourage active transportation

- a. Encourage the creation of complete and integrated communities containing housing, stores, jobs, schools, and civic facilities essential to the daily life of residents.
- b. Discourage the separation of land uses that provide no integrated access to encourage walk, bicycle, and transit use. Recommend reduced distances between destinations. Encourage strategic land use patterns that reduce the number and length of vehicle trips, and make it easier to walk, bicycle and use transit.
- c. Encourage the inclusion of Complete Streets policies to ensure that all roads are safe for drivers, transit users, pedestrians, and bicyclists, as well as for older people, children, and people with disabilities.
- d. Discourage growth which exacerbates high Vehicle Miles Traveled per capita.
- e. Encourage land uses that increase transit ridership and promote projects with a high Floor Area Ratio in Transit Priority Areas throughout the region, which are areas located within 1/2 mile of a high-quality transit.
- f. Promote pedestrian, bicycle and public transit user access. Recommend the location of activities and services within walking distance of transit. Promote Transit Oriented Development (TOD) projects to encourage the development of higher-density housing and employment centers near transit stations.
- g. Support design that promotes safety.
- h. Promote the use of active modes of transportation through the development of continuous networks for pedestrian and bicycle travel and complete streets designed and operated to enable safe usage by everyone, including pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists and transit riders of all ages and abilities.
- i. Encourage secure and convenient bicycle storage and end-of-trip facilities in all projects.
- j. Encourage the linkage of bicycle and transit routes.
- k. Encourage the development of parking policy that provides disincentives for the use of single-occupant vehicles.
- l. Coordinate with the Sacramento Area Council of Governments and transit providers to integrate sustainable modes into projects.

2. Support transportation demand management

- a. Promote the permanent funding of services that reduce the demand for use of single-occupancy vehicles, such as financing Transportation Management Associations through Public Facilities Financing District or County Service Areas.
- b. Encourage employers to support strategies to reduce vehicular transportation demand such as bicycle facilities, alternative work schedules, ridesharing, telecommuting, and unbundled parking.
- c. Encourage increased density of employment centers and housing near public transit rail stations and bus corridors to promote increased ridership.

3. Reduce emissions and energy use in buildings

- a. Encourage energy efficiency for its associated emissions reductions.
- b. Encourage street orientation, placement of buildings, use of shading and landscape designs that reduce energy demand for cooling buildings.
- c. Encourage measures to reduce residential and commercial fuel combustion.
- d. Promote high-albedo roofing materials and pavements.
- e. Encourage the efficient use of water through the use of natural drainage, drought-tolerant landscaping and recycling.
- f. Promote the use of on-site renewable energy systems.
- g. Promote adaptive reuse and conservation of buildings.
- h. Reduce the carbon intensity of structures by encouraging use of recycled, low-maintenance, mold-resistant, and durable materials.

4. Minimize construction emissions

- a. Encourage the use of the latest technology and vehicles, equipment, strategies, and fuels that produce the lowest emissions possible during the construction phases of projects.

5. Reduce exposure to localized pollutants

- a. Promote reduced exposure of sensitive receptors to pollutants through implementation of best practices, such as enhanced air filtration and vegetative barriers.
- b. Encourage the use of low-emission and zero-emission vehicles and equipment.
- c. Promote the use of energy-efficient landscape maintenance equipment as well as low maintenance landscaping.

6. Increase regional tree canopy and greenspace

- a. Recommend trees and vegetation beyond code requirements in land use and transportation projects for the air quality, climate resiliency, and health benefits.
- b. Encourage parks and greenspace designed for accessibility by all transportation modes and all residents.

- c. Encourage landscaping utilizing low-VOC-emitting tree species.

7. Promote equity

- a. Promote the fair treatment of people of all races, cultures, and incomes with respect to the development, adoption, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies.
- b. Further the ability of disadvantaged populations to live close to employment centers, high-quality bicycle and pedestrian facilities, and high-frequency public transportation.