

## 5. Environmental Documentation

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This chapter presents an overview of the environmental review process conducted to determine the probable environmental impacts associated with adoption of the 2018 Monterey County Regional Transportation Plan, including the projected greenhouse gas emissions associated with implementation of the plan.

### Coordinated Environmental Review

As described elsewhere in this document, the *2040 Moving Forward Monterey Bay Plan* prepared by AMBAG and the 2018 Monterey County Regional Transportation Plan are coordinated documents. The Regional Transportation Plan is used by AMBAG to prepare a combined plan and Sustainable Communities Strategy for the Monterey Bay Area. These plans can be classified as a project under the California Environmental Quality Act requiring environmental review appropriate to the scope and nature of the document.

Recognizing an opportunity to achieve cost savings and streamline the environmental review process, AMBAG, the Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission, the San Benito Council of Governments and the Transportation Agency for Monterey County, elected to merge the environmental analysis for each of their respective long-range transportation plans into one analysis. A single Draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR) has therefore been prepared by AMBAG for the *2040 Moving Forward Monterey Bay Plan* (the Metropolitan Transportation Plan and Sustainable Communities Strategy) that includes the Regional Transportation Plans prepared in each county.

### Notice of Preparation

AMBAG prepared and released a Notice of Preparation for the EIR in December, 2015. AMBAG held three scoping meetings on the EIR in Monterey County in January, 2016, which served as public workshops for the regional transportation plans and Sustainable Communities Strategy. The purpose of scoping meetings for the EIR was to collect public input on issues that the EIR should analyze. Input received at the scoping meetings and responses to the Notice of Preparation was incorporated into development of the environmental document.

### Program Environmental Impact Report

The EIR has been prepared as a Program EIR (rather than a "project" EIR). Adoption of the Regional Transportation Plan represents a first step in qualifying projects identified in the document for state and federal funding. The plan does not provide project designs nor details relating to the site-specific alignment, location, and scheduling of the transportation projects. Adoption of this comprehensive planning document does not represent an approval action for any of the individual transportation programs and projects listed in the plan. Additional actions on the part of the agencies and jurisdictions responsible for implementation of individual programs and projects are necessary for projects to proceed.

The program EIR is, therefore, intended to focus on those probable regional environmental effects associated with the implementation of the Regional Transportation Plan that can be identified now, while deferring analysis of site-specific impacts. Further project-specific environmental review is necessary as projects are developed and proposed for funding. Project specific review will be tiered-off of the program-level analysis prepared for the long-range plan.

## **More Information**

The EIR is incorporated into the 2018 Regional Transportation Plan by reference. The reader is referred to the EIR for more information on potential regional, system-wide environmental effects associated with implementation of the plan. The report provides an evaluation of alternatives, identifies an environmentally superior alternative, and identifies potential impacts that could be significant and unavoidable. The Draft EIR is available for review on the AMBAG and Transportation Agency websites and copies can be obtained by contacting either AMBAG or the Transportation Agency.

## **Air Quality Conformity**

AMBAG is responsible for determining that the combined transportation plan for the tri-county Monterey Bay Area conforms with the federally-mandated Air Quality Management Plan prepared by the Monterey Bay Unified Air Pollution Control District (Air District). Air quality planning and regional planning through growth projections are interdependent processes. AMBAG provides regional growth data to the Air District. The Air District regularly updates the Air Quality Management Plan based in part upon those regional projections. The Monterey Bay Area is classified as an attainment area for ozone precursors based on federal ozone standards. The region is in conformity with the State Implementation Plan for air quality and therefore AMBAG is exempt from preparing a conformity analysis.