



Section 7.0:

## Other CEQA Considerations



## **7.0 OTHER CEQA CONSIDERATIONS**

### **7.1 LONG-TERM IMPLICATIONS OF THE PROPOSED PROJECT**

Buildout of the proposed General Plan 2035 would involve a variety of short- and long-term impacts on a local level. During site-specific project grading and construction, portions of surrounding uses may be temporarily impacted by dust and noise. Short-term soil erosion may also occur during grading. There may also be an increase in vehicle pollutant emissions caused by grading and construction activities. However, these disruptions would be temporary and may be avoided or lessened to a large degree through mitigation cited in this EIR and through compliance with the Murrieta *Municipal Code*; refer to [Section 5.0, Environmental Analysis](#).

Development under the proposed General Plan 2035 would potentially create long-term environmental consequences associated with a transition in land use. Development associated with buildout of the proposed General Plan 2035 and the subsequent long-term effects may impact the physical, aesthetic, and human environments. Long-term physical consequences of development include increased traffic volumes, increased noise from project-related mobile (traffic) and stationary (mechanical and landscaping) sources, incremental increased demands for essential public services and utility/service systems, and increased energy and natural resource consumption. Long-term visual impacts would occur with the potential modifications to City and distant views, and alterations to the visual character of portions of the City. Incremental degradation of local and regional air quality could also occur as a result of mobile source emissions generated from project-related traffic and stationary source emissions generated from the consumption of propane and electricity.

### **7.2 IRREVERSIBLE ENVIRONMENTAL CHANGES THAT WOULD BE INVOLVED WITH THE PROPOSED ACTION SHOULD IT BE IMPLEMENTED**

*CEQA Guidelines* Section 15126.2(c) requires a discussion of any significant irreversible environmental changes that would be caused by the proposed project, and states:



*Uses of nonrenewable resources during the initial and continued phases of the project may be irreversible since a large commitment of such resources makes removal or nonuse thereafter unlikely. Primary impacts, and particularly, secondary impacts (such as highway improvement which provides access to a previously inaccessible area) generally commit future generations to similar uses. Also, irreversible damage can result from environmental accidents associated with the project. Irretrievable commitments of resources should be evaluated to assure that such current consumption is justified.*

The proposed General Plan 2035's environmental effects are discussed in [Section 5.0](#). In 2009, a majority (approximately 66 percent) of Murrieta is developed. Single-family residential uses represent approximately 30 percent of the City, while less than six percent is developed with commercial, commercial office, industrial, and public/institutional uses; refer to [Table 3-1, Existing Land Use Summary](#). Approximately 34 percent of the City (approximately 7,291 acres) is currently vacant. Additionally, underutilized land is available for development. Future development resulting from implementation of the proposed General Plan 2035 is anticipated to occur on both vacant and underutilized land throughout the City, however, primarily within the five of the Focus Areas targeted for land use change. Implementation of the proposed General Plan 2035 would allow for new developments in the City that would entail the irreversible commitment of natural resources, energy, land, and human resources. Manpower would also be committed for the development of residential and non-residential uses. Ongoing maintenance and operation of the new developments would entail a further irreversible commitment of energy resources in the form of petroleum products (diesel fuel and gasoline), natural gas, and electricity. Long-term impacts would also result from an increase in vehicular traffic, and the associated air pollutant and noise emissions. These resource commitments would be a long-term obligation given that, practically speaking, it is impossible to return the land to its original condition once it has been developed. In summary, implementation of the proposed General Plan 2035 would involve the following irreversible environmental changes:

- Soil erosion associated with grading and construction activities;
- Alteration of the human environment as a consequence of the development process, which commits land to residential, commercial, professional/office, business park, and civic/institutional uses, and intensifies land uses within the City;
- Increased usage of essential public services (including fire protection, police protection, parks and recreational facilities, schools, solid waste) and utility/service systems (including water, wastewater, electricity, and natural gas) during and after construction of new developments, which would result in temporary and permanent uses of these resources;
- Temporary and permanent commitment of energy and water resources as a result of the construction, long-term operation, and maintenance of new developments, which may be considered a permanent investment;



- Utilization of various new raw materials (such as lumber, sand, and gravel) for construction; and
- Incremental increases in vehicular activity within the City, with resultant air pollutant and noise emissions.

## 7.3 GROWTH INDUCING IMPACTS

*CEQA Guidelines* Section 15126(d), Growth Inducing Impact of the Proposed Project, requires that an EIR “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.” The *CEQA Guidelines* also indicate that it must not be assumed that growth in any area is necessarily beneficial, detrimental, or of little significance to the environment. This section analyzes potential growth-inducing impacts, based on the criteria outlined below, as suggested in the *CEQA Guidelines*. In general terms, a project may foster spatial, economic, or population growth in a geographic area, if it meets any one of the following criteria:

- Removal of an impediment to growth (e.g., establishment of an essential public service and provision of new access to an area);
- Fostering of economic expansion or growth (e.g., changes in revenue base and employment expansion);
- Fostering of population growth (e.g., construction of additional housing), either directly or indirectly;
- Establishment of a precedent-setting action (e.g., an innovation, a change in zoning and general plan amendment approval); or
- Development of or encroachment on an isolated or adjacent area of open space (being distinct from an in-fill project).

Should a project meet any one of the above-listed criteria, it may be considered growth inducing. The potential growth-inducing impacts of the proposed Project are evaluated below against these criteria.

It is noted that the *CEQA Guidelines* require an EIR to “discuss the ways” a project could be growth-inducing and to “discuss the characteristics of some projects that may encourage...activities that could significantly affect the environment.” However, the *CEQA Guidelines* do not require that an EIR predict (or speculate) specifically where such growth would occur, in what form it would occur, or when it would occur. The answers to such questions require speculation, which CEQA discourages; refer to *CEQA Guidelines* Section 15145, Speculation.



## IMPEDIMENT TO GROWTH

Future development resulting from implementation of the proposed General Plan 2035 is anticipated to occur on both vacant and underutilized land throughout the City, however, primarily within the five Focus Areas targeted for land use change. As discussed in detail in Section 3.0, Project Description, the proposed General Plan 2035 has taken a focused development strategy that would be implemented through seven Focus Areas, with individualized approaches for each area.

With the exception of the Los Alamos Hills Focus Area, none of the six other Focus Areas would involve development that would establish an essential public service or utility/service system. The Los Alamos Hills Focus Area consists primarily of rural residential uses with water wells and septic tanks. In addition, many of the properties in the Los Alamos Hills are not included within a water district that could provide water and/or sewer service to the area. The lack of existing water and sewer infrastructure systems that connect to other systems in the City and the region could be an impediment to growth in this area. Future development in this area would require coordination with appropriate water districts regarding the infrastructure needed to support the proposed development. The proposed General Plan 2035 includes goals and policies for the Los Alamos Hills Focus Area that include the preparation of a Specific Plan, along with goals and policies regarding the provision of infrastructure to support the development proposed in a future Specific Plan.

Murrieta's developed areas and Focus Areas are already served by essential public services, including fire protection, police protection, parks and recreational facilities, schools, and solid waste; an extensive network of utility/service systems, including water, wastewater, electricity, and natural gas; and other infrastructure necessary to accommodate or allow the existing conditions and planned growth. The existing public services and utility/service systems can be readily upgraded and/or extended onto the future development sites. The increased demands for public services and utility/service systems would not reduce or impair any existing or future levels of services, either locally or regionally, as costs for increases in public services and utility/service systems would be provided through cooperative agreements between future developments and servicing agencies. Further, future development would be reviewed a project-by-project basis, at the time of proposed construction, in order to determine the public services and utility/service systems necessary to serve the proposed land uses. Buildout of the proposed General Plan 2035 would not require substantial development of unplanned or unforeseen public services and utility/service systems. Therefore, implementation of the proposed General Plan 2035 would not be growth-inducing with respect to removal of an impediment to growth through establishment of an essential public service or expansion to a new area.

Regional access to the City is provided via Interstates 15 and 215, and local access is provided by existing roadways. The proposed General Plan 2035 has taken a focused development strategy that would be implemented through the five Focus Areas targeted for land use change, which are concentrated along Interstates 15 and 215. The growth over existing conditions resulting from project implementation would occur both within the Focus Areas and throughout



the City. Although, project implementation would facilitate the installation and construction of transportation improvements within the City necessary to carry out the proposed General Plan 2035, as discussed in detail in Section 5.4, Traffic and Circulation, these improvements would not provide new access to an area, since access is already provided by an existing roadway network. Therefore, implementation of the proposed General Plan 2035 would not remove an existing impediment to growth through the provision of new access to an area.

## ECONOMIC GROWTH

As indicated in Table 5.2-9, General Plan 2035 Compared to Existing Conditions, the proposed General Plan 2035 would increase the City's existing population by approximately 32 percent or 32,199 persons. The projected population growth is anticipated to increase sales, with resultant increases in the City's revenue base. Additionally, the proposed General Plan 2035 would increase the City's existing non-residential floor area by approximately 36.2 million square feet and employment by approximately 555 percent or 110,275 jobs; refer to Table 5.2-9. The majority of the employment growth would occur in the Commercial and Office and Research Park land use categories. Implementation of the proposed General Plan 2035 would foster economic expansion through changes in the revenue base resulting from population and employment growth. Therefore, the proposed project is considered growth inducing with respect to economic expansion.

## POPULATION GROWTH

A project could induce population growth in an area, either directly (for example, by proposing new homes and businesses) or indirectly (for example, through extension of roads or other infrastructure). Although existing roads and infrastructure would be improved/modified, the proposed General Plan 2035 does not involve the extension of roads or other infrastructure into undeveloped areas; refer to Section 5.4, Traffic and Circulation, and Impediment to Growth Section above. The proposed General Plan 2035 would, however, involve new homes and businesses, which would induce direct growth in the City's population.

The proposed General Plan 2035 would involve the development of approximately 10,734 dwelling units (DU), which would induce direct growth in the City's population by approximately 32 percent or 32,199 persons. The proposed General Plan 2035 would also involve the development of new businesses, with a resultant growth in employment of approximately 555 percent or 110,275 jobs. The employment generated by the proposed General Plan 2035 could result in direct growth in the City's population, because the potential exists for future employees (and their families) to relocate to the City. As concluded in Section 5.2, Population, Housing, and Employment, estimating the number of the new employees who would relocate to the City would be highly speculative, because many factors influence personal housing location decisions. Therefore, the precise number of new employees who may relocate to the City to fill the newly created positions is unknown. However, as discussed above, the proposed General Plan 2035 would potentially increase the City's existing housing inventory by



3,346 DU in the Focus Areas, which could be occupied by new employees relocating to the City. The population growth associated with these new dwellings is approximately 32,199 persons. Additionally, the vacancy rates of Murrieta and surrounding cities range from 4.30 to 9.94 percent; refer to Section 5.2. Collectively, the existing vacancies amount to approximately 7,500 DU, which could also be occupied by new employees, with resultant increases in population. Therefore, the proposed General Plan 2035 is considered growth inducing with respect to direct population growth, given it would involve the development of both new homes and businesses.

Potential growth inducing impacts are also assessed based on a project's consistency with adopted plans that have addressed growth management from a local and regional standpoint. As discussed in Section 5.2, SCAG is the responsible agency for developing and adopting regional housing, population, and employment growth forecasts for local Riverside County governments, among other counties. SCAG provides population, household, and employment projection estimates in five-year increments from 2005 to 2035. Table 5.2-9, General Plan 2035 Compared to SCAG, compares the proposed General Plan 2035's buildout projections with SCAG's 2035 housing, population, and employment forecasts for the City. As indicated in Table 5.2-9, SCAG projects that the City's housing inventory will reach 43,966 DU by 2035, with a resultant population of approximately 127,962 persons. At buildout (2035), the proposed General Plan 2035 would result in a housing inventory of approximately 44,484 DU, with a resultant population of approximately 133,452 persons. Although the City's population would be slightly (approximately 4.3 percent) greater than projected by SCAG, the forecast growth is generally consistent.

## PRECEDENT-SETTING ACTION

The proposed project would be considered growth-inducing with respect to the establishment of a precedent. The proposed Murrieta General Plan 2035 is a comprehensive update of the 1994 General Plan, which has been tailored to meet the City's needs and issues at the present time and foreseeable future. The project's major components include updates to the development projections to the year 2035 and Land Use Element, including the establishment of building densities for residential land use categories and intensities for all non-residential categories, among other components. Buildout according to the proposed General Plan 2035 anticipates the development of approximately 44,484 DU and approximately 50.2 million square feet of non-residential land uses, or approximately 10,734 DU and 36.2 million square feet over existing conditions. All future land uses within the City would be developed pursuant to the Land Use Policy Map. Additionally, the proposed General Plan 2035 has taken a focused development strategy that would be implemented through seven Focus Areas, with individualized approaches for each area.



## DEVELOPMENT OR ENCROACHMENT OF OPEN SPACE

A majority (approximately 66 percent) of Murrieta is built-out and consists of developed areas. Future development resulting from implementation of the proposed General Plan 2035 is anticipated to occur on both vacant and underutilized land throughout the City, however, primarily within the five Focus Areas targeted for land use change. The proposed General Plan 2035 has taken a focused development strategy that would be implemented through the seven Focus Areas, which are generally concentrated along Interstates 15 and 215. The growth over existing conditions resulting from project implementation would occur throughout the City and within the Focus Areas. The proposed General Plan 2035 focuses on preserving residential neighborhoods, guiding the remaining development and redevelopment opportunities, and revitalizing selected areas through the Focus Area approach. None of the Focus Areas would involve development that would encroach on an isolated area of open space, with the potential exception of the Los Alamos Hills Focus Area. Additionally, while approximately 34 percent of the City (approximately 7,291 acres) is currently vacant, it is the City's goal (Goal LU-1) to provide a complementary balance of land uses throughout the community that meets the needs of existing residents and businesses as well as anticipated growth, and achieves the community's vision. To this end, the City would provide for the development of complementary land uses, such as open space, for all future residential and non-residential development (Policy LU-1.4). Accordingly, the proposed General Plan 2035 includes the Parks and Open Space Land Use Designation, which is intended to provide for the preservation of natural open spaces, protection of wildlife habitats, and maintenance of natural and scenic resources, among other objectives. Approximately 3,221 acres are designated Parks and Open Space, representing approximately 18 percent of the City. The Parks and Open Space designation includes lands that would remain undeveloped within the City's Planning Area. Additionally, the General Plan 2035 Conservation Element and Parks and Open Space Element have established goals and policies to preserve open space, as follows:

### CONSERVATION ELEMENT

**Goal CSV-5** Hills and ridges are protected for their environmental and aesthetic values.

#### Policies

- CSV-5.1 Promote compliance with hillside development standards and guidelines to maintain the natural character and the environmental and aesthetic values of sloped areas.
- CSV-5.2 Incorporate significant landform features into City parks and open space, where appropriate.



## RECREATION AND OPEN SPACE ELEMENT

**Goal ROS-7** Open space areas are planned to protect, conserve, and utilize resources of unique character and value for the community.

### Policies

ROS-7.1 Preserve and enhance open space resources in Murrieta.

ROS-7.2 Designate open space to preserve habitat and scenic views of natural areas.

ROS-7.3: Seek opportunities to designate open space along waterways, while also providing for the development of trails.

Therefore, given that future development would be subject to compliance with the proposed General Plan 2035's Goals and Policies, project implementation would not be growth-inducing with respect to development or encroachment into an isolated area of open space.

## SUMMARY OF IMPACTS

Overall, implementation of the proposed General Plan 2035 would not be growth-inducing with respect to removing an impediment to growth (i.e., establishing an essential public service or provision of new access to an area) or encroaching on an isolated area of open space, with the exception of the Los Alamos Hills Focus Area. As discussed above, the Los Alamos Hills Focus Area has limited water and sewer infrastructure today. The proposed General Plan 2035 includes goals and policies for the Los Alamos Hills Focus Area that include the preparation of a Specific Plan, along with goals and policies regarding the provision of infrastructure to support the development proposed in a future Specific Plan.

The proposed project would be growth-inducing with respect to fostering economic expansion and population growth, and establishing a precedent-setting action. The population, housing, and employment growth projected at buildout of the proposed General Plan 2035 would be substantially similar to SCAG's projections for the City. Thus, development within the City would be responding to growth that was previously planned, rather than creating growth that would require substantial development of unplanned and unforeseen support uses and services. Further, the proposed General Plan 2035 accounts for the increased growth and establishes goals and policies to reduce its potential growth-related impacts. All future development within the City with growth-inducing potential would be subject to compliance with the proposed General Plan 2035 goals and policies outlined in [Section 5.2](#). Additionally, the forecast population increase would occur over a 25-year period, allowing for development of necessary services and infrastructure commensurate with the proposed growth.



At the regional level, the emphasis regarding growth has been placed primarily on achieving a balance of employment and housing opportunities within the subregions. This regional concept, referred to as jobs/housing balance, encourages the designation and zoning of sufficient vacant land for residential uses with appropriate standards to ensure adequate housing is available to serve the needs derived from the local employment base. The jobs/housing ratio can be used as the general measure of balance between a community's employment opportunities and the housing needs of its residents. A ratio of 1.0 or greater generally indicates that a City provides adequate employment opportunities, potentially allowing its residents to work within the City. A desirable jobs/housing balance improves regional mobility (traffic), reduces vehicle miles traveled, and improves air quality. Conversely, imbalance between a City's jobs and housing increases commutes, with resultant increases in traffic volumes and air emissions, and overall reduces the quality of life.

Under existing conditions, the City's jobs/housing ratio is approximately 0.60, indicating the City is currently housing rich and job poor with insufficient employment opportunities for its residents.<sup>1</sup> The proposed General Plan 2035 would increase the City's existing employment by approximately 555 percent (110,275 new jobs). With implementation of the proposed General Plan 2035, the City's jobs/housing ratio would be approximately 2.9,<sup>2</sup> indicating the City would be able to provide adequate employment opportunities for its residents, potentially allowing them to live as well as work within the City. As such, the proposed General Plan 2035 would provide more employment opportunities for its residents, than are currently provided. Therefore, the proposed General Plan 2035 would beneficially impact the City's job/housing balance, by improving the job/housing ratio when compared to existing conditions. Additionally, the proposed General Plan 2035 would provide approximately 313 percent more employment than SCAG's projection of 31,540 jobs, which represents a difference of approximately 98,613 jobs. While the proposed General Plan 2035 would induce growth in the City over existing conditions, this is considered a beneficial impact.

## 7.4 ENERGY CONSERVATION

*Public Resources Code* Section 21100(b)(3) and *CEQA Guidelines* Appendix F requires a description (where relevant) of the wasteful, inefficient, and unnecessary consumption of energy caused by a project. In 1975, the California State Legislature adopted Assembly Bill 1575 (AB 1575) in response to the oil crisis of the 1970s.

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<sup>1</sup> Based on 19,878 jobs and 33,750 DU existing (2009).

<sup>2</sup> Based on 130,153 jobs and 44,484 DU at buildout (2035).



## PROJECT ENERGY CONSUMPTION

### Short-Term Construction

In 1994, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) adopted the first set of emission standards (Tier 1) for all new off-road diesel engines greater than 37 kilowatts (kW). The Tier 1 standards were phased in for different engine sizes between 1996 and 2000, reducing NO<sub>x</sub> emissions from these engines by 30 percent. The EPA Tier 2 and Tier 3 standards for off-road diesel engines are projected to further reduce emissions by 60 percent for NO<sub>x</sub> and 40 percent for particulate matter from Tier 1 emission levels. In 2004, the EPA issued the Clean Air Nonroad Diesel Rule which will cut emissions from off-road diesel engines by more than 90 percent.

The proposed General Plan 2035 would not directly result in the construction of any new development projects. However, its implementation could facilitate development of various commercial, office and research park, business park, industrial, and civic/institutional uses. There are no unusual characteristics of the proposed General Plan 2035 that would necessitate the use of construction equipment that is less energy-efficient than at comparable construction sites. Therefore, compliance with the goals and policies in the proposed General Plan 2035 would not result in inefficient, wasteful, or unnecessary fuel consumption.

### Long-Term Operations

## TRANSPORTATION

Pursuant to the Federal Energy Policy and Conservation Act of 1975, the National Highway Traffic and Safety Administration (NHTSA) is responsible for establishing additional vehicle standards and for revising existing standards. Since 1990, the fuel economy standard for new passenger cars has been 27.5 miles per gallon (mpg). The fuel economy standard for new light trucks (gross vehicle weight of 8,500 pounds or less) has been 20.7 mpg since 1996. Heavy-duty vehicles (i.e., vehicles and trucks over 8,500 pounds gross vehicle weight) are not currently subject to fuel economy standards. Compliance with Federal fuel economy standards is not determined for each individual vehicle model. Rather, compliance is determined based on each manufacturer's average fuel economy for the portion of their vehicles produced for sale in the United States.

The proposed General Plan 2035 includes goals and policies encouraging transit-oriented and mixed use development to reduce daily vehicle trips and vehicle miles traveled (VMT). The proposed General Plan 2035 is not anticipated to result in any unusual characteristics that would result in excessive long-term operational fuel consumption. The Riverside Transit Agency (RTA) currently provides fixed bus routes in the City of Murrieta along the I-15 and I-215 Freeways, and along portions of Clinton Keith Road, California Oaks Road/Kalmia Street, Madison Street, Los Alamos Road, Murrieta Hot Springs Road, and Whitewood Road (refer to



*Exhibit 5.4-10, Existing Transit Routes*). Additionally, the proposed General Plan 2035 provides strategies to improve transit service and overall mobility within the City that would result in a decrease in auto dependency. Future development under the proposed General Plan 2035 would increase density and improve the jobs/housing balance, which would increase public transportation patronage. The availability of public transit for City residents, employees, and visitors would ensure that the project would not result in the inefficient, wasteful, or unnecessary consumption of transportation energy.

Overall, fuel consumption associated with vehicle trips generated by future development within Murrieta would not be considered inefficient, wasteful, or unnecessary in comparison to other cities in the region.

## ENERGY DEMAND

*California Code of Regulations, Title 24, Part 6*, is California's Energy Efficiency Standards for Residential and Non-residential Buildings. Title 24 was established by the California Energy Commission (CEC) in 1978 in response to a legislative mandate to create uniform building codes to reduce California's energy consumption, and provide energy efficiency standards for residential and non-residential buildings. In 2010, the CEC updated Title 24 standards with more stringent requirements. The 2010 Standards are expected to substantially reduce the growth in electricity and natural gas use. Additional savings result from the application of the Standards on building alterations, such as those within Section V (Site Lighting) including Subpart E (Windows), F (Roofs), and S (Mechanical Equipment). These savings are cumulative, increasing as years go by.

The proposed General Plan 2035 would not result in any unusual characteristics that would result in excessive long-term operational building energy demand. The proposed General Plan 2035 includes numerous energy efficiency goals and policies. Namely, it is the City's goal (Conservation Element Goal CSV-12) to prioritize energy conservation and the generation of energy from renewable sources, as part of an overall strategy to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. To this end, the City would implement the following goal and policies:

## CONSERVATION ELEMENT

**Goal CSV-12** Energy conservation and the generation of energy from renewable sources is prioritized as part of an overall strategy to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

### Policies

CSV-12.1 Ensure that all developments comply with energy efficiency requirements as mandated by the applicable Building Code.



- CSV-12.2 Work with energy utilities to encourage and incentivize the retrofitting of building systems with energy-conserving fixtures and appliances.
- CSV-12.3 Support the on-site installation and use of renewable energy generation systems for residential, commercial, institutional, and industrial uses.
- CSV-12.4 Explore options for addressing aesthetic concerns about renewable energy systems that do not unreasonably restrict the use of these systems, remaining consistent with State law.
- CSV-12.5 Consider non-commercial solar power generation in residential areas.
- CSV-12.6 Encourage new development projects and significant rehabilitation or expansion projects to incorporate innovative energy conservation or generation amenities such as electric vehicle charging stations, solar canopies, and carports.
- CSV-12.7 Support bulk purchasing or financing packages of renewable energy purchasing for residential, business and government facilities.
- CSV-12.8 Promote community awareness of opportunities to conserve energy and use renewable energy.

It is also the City’s goal (Conservation Element Goal CSV-14) to encourage and incentivize the sustainable development of buildings and neighborhoods, particularly with respect to durability, energy and water use, and transportation impacts. To this end, the City would ensure that all applicable construction projects comply with the California State Green Building Standards Code (Policy CSV-14.1). Additionally, the City would integrate other principles of green building into development standards and guidelines, looking for opportunities to realize other benefits such as improved health and increased bicycle transportation (Policy CSV-14.2).