
5. GENERAL IMPACT CATEGORIES

4. GROWTH INDUCING IMPACTS

Section 15126.2(d) of the State CEQA Guidelines requires a discussion of the ways in which a proposed project could be growth-inducing. This would include ways in which the project would foster economic or population growth, or the construction of additional housing, either directly or indirectly, in the surrounding environment. Section 15126.2(d) requires an EIR to:

“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. Included in this are projects that would remove obstacles to population growth (a major expansion of a wastewater treatment plant might, for example, allow for more construction in service areas). Increases in the population may further tax existing community service facilities so consideration must be given to this impact. Also discuss the characteristic of some projects which may encourage and facilitate other activities that could significantly affect the environment, either individually or cumulatively. It must not be assumed growth in any area is beneficial, detrimental, or of little significance to the environment.”

This project is part of the City of Santa Clarita's proposed 10 year plan to upgrade the city road network, as presented in the City's General Plan. This project would meet the anticipated demand for improved traffic circulation resulting from the growth of the City.

The extension of Dockweiler Drive from between 12th Street through the Master's University to the existing Dockweiler Drive roadway has been designated as a 4-lane secondary highway in the City's General Plan. Currently, Dockweiler Drive extends from Sierra Highway near State Route 14 and terminates approximately 0.8 miles to west near Valle Del Oro and Lyons Avenue extends from I-5 to Railroad Avenue. This proposed segment of the Lyons Avenue / Dockweiler Drive connection serves as a critical link in one of the City's major east-west arterial highways.

The City of Santa Clarita is one of the fastest growing cities in Los Angeles County. The City's General Plan Circulation Element includes the subject project. This roadway segment and its extension have been re-designated as a 4-lane secondary highway in the City's updated General Plan. The existing local roadway network including Newhall Avenue, Sierra Highway, State Route 14, and Interstate 5, cannot accommodate the forecasted increase in cross-valley traffic. As such, the City's adopted General Plan identifies a future Dockweiler Drive connection to Railroad Avenue as a needed roadway to accommodate future traffic levels. Lyons Ave / Dockweiler Drive improvements will provide this vital link by implementing a new east-west connection and will function as a Complete Streets corridor. The only other east-west roadway in the vicinity is Newhall Avenue which experiences significant peak-hour congestion. This results in increased motorist travel times, difficulty in keeping transit services on-time, delays in emergency vehicle response times (including wildfire suppression), and traffic safety concerns. Newhall Avenue is a heavily traveled corridor, exceeding 43,000 in daily traffic volumes as of April 2013. The current Level of Service (LOS) for the intersection of Newhall Avenue and Lyons Avenue is

LOS C during the AM peak hour and LOS D in the PM peak hour. If the proposed project is not built, the daily traffic volumes are anticipated to exceed 56,000 with the LOS for this intersection projected to be LOS E in the PM peak hour. The Proposed Project will provide a second east-west arterial and benefits all types of vehicular traffic (commuters, transit goods movement, and emergency responders) as an alternate to Newhall Avenue, ultimately reducing the peak hour delay from 115 to 75 vehicle-hours (a difference of 45 vehicle-hours) per day.

The Santa Clarita General Plan environs several large developments in the area, and as such traffic volumes have the potential to increase significantly. The project is intended to serve as a major east-west corridor link segment in the area and to facilitate access to existing and planned development. The proposed segment of Dockweiler Drive must be improved to ultimate width prior to the City's build out (year 2030 and beyond) according to Santa Clarita's General Plan (adopted June 26, 1991 and amended in December 1997 and June 2011). With Construction of the Project,, this segment of the Lyons Avenue/Dockweiler Drive extension will connect with Lyons Avenue west of the railroad and to Dockweiler.

Construction of the proposed roadway segment will reduce "cross valley" trip lengths and travel times, provide an alternate travel route and support a multi-modal "Complete Street" transportation network by reducing bus travel times in the City. Completion of this gap will also serve an increase in bike and pedestrian traffic, as well as close a vital gap in these facilities leading to the Newhall Metrolink station. The resultant decrease in congestion and encouragement of active transportation modes will have an enriching effect on the environment by decreasing vehicle related pollutants and thereby improving community health and the quality of life. Thus the Proposed Project would accommodate the planned and anticipated growth within the City and would not create or induce substantial growth-inducing impacts that have not already been accounted for within the City's General Plan.