

FINAL ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT

2005 MONTEREY BAY AREA
METROPOLITAN TRANSPORTATION PLAN
Association of Monterey Bay Area Governments

2005 MONTEREY COUNTY
REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION PLAN
Transportation Agency for Monterey County

2005 SANTA CRUZ COUNTY
REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION PLAN
Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission

State Clearinghouse #2004061013

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April 26, 2005

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
PREFACE	P-1
A. Purpose of the Final Environmental Impact Report	P-1
B. Organization of the Final EIR	P-2
C. Public Review Process	P-2
REVISIONS TO THE DRAFT EIR	R-1
COMMENTS AND RESPONSES	C&R-1
FEIR APPENDIX – PROJECTS REVISED SINCE DRAFT MTP WAS RELEASED	

TABLE OF CONTENTS

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PREFACE

A. PURPOSE OF THE FINAL ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT

The California Environmental Quality Act of 1970, as amended (CEQA) requires Environmental Impact Reports (EIRs) to be prepared for all projects which may have a significant impact on the environment. An EIR is an information document, the purposes of which, according to CEQA Guidelines, are "...to identify the significant effects of a project on the environment, to identify alternatives to the project, and to indicate the manner in which such significant effects can be mitigated or avoided." The information contained in this EIR is intended to be objective and impartial, to enable the reader to arrive at an independent judgment regarding the probable character and significance of the impacts resulting from the adoption and implementation of the 2005 Metropolitan Transportation Plan (2005 MTP), the 2005 Monterey County Regional Transportation Plan (2005 MC-RTP) and the 2005 Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Plan (2005 SCC-RTP), herein referenced as the "three plans".

In accordance with the requirements of CEQA, this Final EIR formally consists of the responses to comments on the Draft EIR and revisions of those portions of the Draft EIR which have been modified in response to comments received during the public review period on the Draft EIR. The Final EIR includes copies of all comments on the Draft EIR received during the 45-day public review period following publication of the Draft EIR, and provides responses to those comments. In some cases, the responses have also resulted in revisions to the Draft EIR, and all such changes are reflected in this document. As required by CEQA, this document addresses those comments received during the public review period that relate directly to the adequacy and completeness of the Draft EIR. The Final EIR does not include or address those comments received that relate to the characteristics or features of the three plans where the Draft EIR's analysis of the environmental issues associated with the implementation of the three plans are not directly involved.

The EIR (which is comprised of the Draft EIR and the Final EIR) is intended to be certified as a complete and thorough program-level record of the types of environmental impacts that may be associated with the implementation of the three plans by the Lead Agencies (the Association of Monterey Bay Area Governments for the 2005 Monterey Bay Metropolitan Transportation Plan, the Transportation Agency for Monterey County for the 2005 Monterey County Regional

Transportation Plan, and the Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission for the 2005 Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Plan). Certification of the EIR as adequate and complete must take place prior to any formal Lead Agency action on adopting the three plans, and certification of the EIR does not equate to adoption of the three plans.

The EIR has been prepared pursuant to CEQA as amended (commencing with Section 21000 of the California Public Resources Code), and the CEQA Guidelines.

B. ORGANIZATION OF THE FINAL EIR

The Final EIR consists of the following major sections:

- **Preface** – outlines the objectives of the EIR and important preliminary information.
- **Revisions of the Draft EIR** – contains revisions to the Draft EIR text.
- **Comments and Responses** – contains letters of comment on the Draft EIR and verbal comments recorded during the public hearings on the Draft EIR, along with responses to these comments. In response to some comments, the text of the Draft EIR has been modified, with changes indicated as described in the previous paragraph.

This Final EIR has been prepared for the Lead Agencies by Lamphier-Gregory, Urban Planning and Environmental Analysis. Each participant in the preparation of the EIR has extensive experience and knowledge in their respective fields. The information in the EIR has been compiled from a variety of sources, including published studies, applicable maps and independent field investigations.

C. PUBLIC REVIEW PROCESS

The Draft EIR was circulated for a public review period of 45 days (February 15, 2005 through April 1, 2005). During that period, three public hearings were held to obtain public comment on the adequacy and completeness of the Draft EIR (on March 9, 2005 in Marina for AMBAG, on March 17, 2005 in Watsonville for SCCRTC, and March 23, 2005 in Salinas for TAMC). The Draft EIR was available for review at the offices of the Association of Monterey Bay Area Governments (445 Reservation Road, Suite G, Marina, California), the offices of the Transportation Agency for Monterey County (55-B Plaza Circle, Salinas, CA) and the offices of the Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission (1523 Pacific Avenue, Santa Cruz, CA), and at many local libraries within Monterey, San Benito and Santa Cruz Counties. In addition to the three agencies mailing hard copies of the Draft EIR to various partner agencies and applicable agency committees, the Draft EIR was also available for review on the SCCRTC and TAMC websites. The Draft EIR was additionally circulated for review through the State of California Office of Planning and Research's State Clearinghouse, as well as AMBAG's Regional Clearinghouse.

At the close of the public review period, all comments received were compiled, and responses to these comments were prepared and are presented in this Final EIR. The Final EIR also incorporates any necessary revisions to the Draft EIR made in response to comments received. The Boards of Directors of AMBAG, TAMC and SCCRTC will each review the EIR (comprised of the Draft EIR and Final EIR), and independently consider whether or not to certify the EIR as adequate and complete.

After reviewing the Draft EIR and the Final EIR, and following action to certify the EIR as adequate and complete, the Boards of Director of the Association of Monterey Bay Area Governments, the Board of Directors of the Transportation Agency for Monterey County, and the Commissioners of the Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission will each be in a position to determine whether each of the three documents should be adopted as proposed, revised, or rejected. This determination will be based upon information presented on the three transportation plans, impacts and probable consequences, and the possible alternatives and mitigation measures available.

Where potentially significant and unavoidable environmental impacts have been identified in the EIR, each Lead Agency will be required to make a written statement of overriding considerations. In accordance with CEQA Guidelines, Section 15093 [a], a decision-making agency must balance, as applicable, the economic, legal, social, technological, or other benefits of a proposed project against its unavoidable environmental risks when determining whether to approve the project. If the specific economic, legal, social, technological, or other benefits of a proposed project outweigh the unavoidable adverse environmental effects, the adverse environmental effects may be considered “acceptable”.

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REVISIONS TO THE DRAFT EIR

On Draft EIR page ES-8, the first sentence in paragraph “B” has been modified to read as follows:

“B. Implementing agencies shall, where appropriate, design transportation project alignments to avoid ridgelines or slopes of 30 percent or greater, and to avoid or minimize substantial physical alteration of the land, due to large amounts of cut and fill.”

On Draft EIR page ES-14, paragraph “B” has been modified to read as follows:

“B. In those instances where projects are proposed in areas adjacent to lands currently in agricultural uses (particularly lands which have been designated as prime farmland, unique farmland or farmland of statewide importance), implementing agencies shall, where appropriate, incorporate project-specific design features which would provide adequate protection for the farmland adjacent to the project site (fencing, warning notices, buffers, etc.).”

On Draft EIR page 3-7, the first sentence in paragraph “B” has been modified to read as follows:

“B. Implementing agencies shall, where appropriate, design transportation project alignments to avoid ridgelines or slopes of 30 percent or greater, and to avoid or minimize substantial physical alteration of the land, due to large amounts of cut and fill.”

On Draft EIR page 3-15, paragraph “B” has been modified to read as follows:

“B. In those instances where projects are proposed in areas adjacent to lands currently in agricultural uses (particularly lands which have been designated as prime farmland, unique farmland or farmland of statewide importance), implementing agencies shall, where appropriate, incorporate project-specific design features which would provide adequate protection for the farmland adjacent to the project site (fencing, warning notices, buffers, etc.).”

On Draft EIR page 3-22, the text of the first sentence in the second paragraph under **Current Air Quality** has been modified to read as follows:

“Under the California Clean Air Act, the NCCAB is a ~~moderate~~ nonattainment transitional area for the State ozone AAQS.”

On Draft EIR page 3-23, the entry under “State” on the line for “Ozone (O³) – 1 hour” in **Table 3-2: Attainment Status of the North Central Coast Air Basin** has been modified to read as follows:

“Moderate Nonattainment ~~Transitional~~”

On Draft EIR page 3-27, the text of fourth sentence in the first paragraph has been modified to read as follows:

“The 2004 AQMP uses the same 2004 population projections and travel data assumptions for the period through 2030 as do the three plans.”

The following text has been added below the last paragraph on Draft EIR page 3-34:

“Under the Water Quality Control Plan for Ocean Waters of California, the State Water Resources Control Board has identified five Areas of Special Biological Significance (ASBS) within the region:

Pacific Grove Marina Gardens Fish Refuge and Hopkins Marine Life Refuge

Carmel Bay ASBS

Point Lobos Ecological Reserve ASBS

Julia Pfeiffer Burns Underwater Park ASBS

Ocean Area Surrounding the Mouth of Salmon Creek ASBS

The purpose of designating these ASBS is to protect these areas from undesirable changes in natural water quality. The ASBS designation is based on the presence of certain species or biological communities that deserve special protection consisting of preservation and maintenance of natural water quality conditions to the extent practicable (Water Resources Control Board and California Regional Water Quality Control Board Administrative Procedures, September 24, 1970, Section XI and Miscellaneous Rev. 7-9/1/72). New point-source discharges into ASBSs are strictly prohibited. Along the coast between Monterey and San Francisco, prospective point-source dischargers are required by the SWRCB to show, through techniques such as mathematical modeling, that there will be no deleterious effects of the new discharge in the water quality of nearby ASBSs.”

COMMENTS AND RESPONSES

This chapter contains written comments on the Draft EIR on the three plans. Letters received during the 45-day public review period are listed. Each letter is marked to identify distinct comments on the Draft EIR. Responses to these comments are provided following each letter. No comments were received at the public hearings on the Draft EIR, held on March 9, 2005 (AMBAG), March 17, 2005 (SCCRTC) and March 23, 2005 (TAMC).

Throughout the responses to comments, where a specific comment has been addressed previously, a reference to the response in which the comment is discussed may be provided in order to reduce repetition.

As noted in the **PREFACE**, in several instances responding to a comment received on the Draft EIR has resulted in a revision to the text of the Draft EIR. In other cases, the information provided in the responses is deemed adequate in itself, and modification of the Draft EIR text was not deemed appropriate.

In reviewing the comments received on the Draft EIR, it should be noted that while some of the material submitted provides opinion on the three plans or addresses features and characteristics of the three plans as currently proposed, such material may not address the environmental analysis presented in the Draft EIR. Responses presented in this document focus only on those comments which bear a direct relationship to the Draft EIR, as required under CEQA. While other comments that are not directly related to the Draft EIR may be acknowledged, it is beyond the scope of the Final EIR to provide responses to these comments or opinions. Additional letters that were received by lead agencies which did not include comments on the Draft EIR are not included in this document, but were considered by the respective lead agencies.

Several additional points to keep in mind in reviewing the comments received on the Draft EIR are presented in Section 15204 of the CEQA Guidelines (as revised on October 28, 1998) which states that a Lead Agency need not “conduct every test or perform all research, study, and experimentation recommended or demanded by commentors.”, in Section 15003 (h) which states that “CEQA does not require technical perfection in an EIR, but rather adequacy, completeness, and a good-faith effort at full disclosure. A court does not pass on the correctness of an EIR’s environmental conclusions, but only determines if the EIR is sufficient as an informational document.”, and in Section 15003 (j), which states: “CEQA requires that decisions be informed and balanced. It must not be subverted into an instrument for the oppression and delay of social, economic, or recreational development or advancement.”

COMMENTS AND RESPONSES

The letters received on the Draft EIR are listed below. Each letter has been marked to identify each specific comment in the right-hand margin (i.e., **A-1**, **D-2**, etc.). Following each letter, the response to each identified comment in that letter is presented sequentially (for example, the first comment on the Draft EIR identified in **LETTER C** is identified as **C-1** in the right-hand margin of the letter, and the corresponding response immediately following **LETTER C** is coded as **RESPONSE C-1**). In order to avoid repetition, where individual comments focus on the same issues raised in a previous comment or comments, the response to those comments may make reference to a previous response or responses.

LIST OF LETTERS	Page
A. Jean Getchell, Supervising Planner, Monterey Bay Unified Air Pollution Control District, February 22, 2005.	C&R-3
B. Nicolas Papadakis, Executive Director, Association of Monterey Bay Area Governments, March 10, 2005.	C&R-5
C. Steve Lustgarden, March 17, 2005.	C&R-7
D. David M. Murray, Chief, Regional Planning/Development Review, California Department of Transportation, March 30, 2005.	C&R-9
E. Scott Hennessey, Director, Monterey County Planning and Building Inspection Department, March 31, 2005.	C&R-15
F. Raymond W. Santee, Vice President, Central Home Supply, March 31, 2005.	C&R-22
G. James Danahar, Chair, Transportation Committee, and Aldo Giacchino, Chair, Executive Committee, Santa Cruz County Group of the Ventana Chapter, Sierra Club, April 1, 2005.	C&R-25
H. Mike Weaver, April 1, 2005.	C&R-27
I. Terry Roberts, Director, State Clearinghouse, Governor's Office of Planning and Research, April 4, 2005.	C&R-31
J. Terry Roberts, Director, State Clearinghouse, Governor's Office of Planning and Research, April 4, 2004 (attached letter from Robert W. Floerke, Regional Manager, Central Coast Region, California Department of Fish and Game, April 1, 2005).	C&R-34
Public Hearing – Association of Monterey Bay Area Governments, March 9, 2005.	C&R-38
Public Hearing – Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission, March 17, 2005.	C&R-38
Public Hearing – Transportation Agency for Monterey County, March 23, 2005.	C&R-38



MONTEREY BAY
 Unified Air Pollution Control District
 serving Monterey, San Benito, and Santa Cruz counties

MAR 01 2005

LETTER A

AIR POLLUTION CONTROL OFFICER
 Douglas Quetin

24580 Silver Cloud Court • Monterey, California 93940 • 831/647-9411 • FAX 831/647-8501

DISTRICT
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February 22, 2005

Kathy Urlie
 AMBAG
 P.O. Box 809
 Marina, CA 93933-0809

SUBJECT: DEIR FOR 2005 METROPOLITAN TRANSPORTATION PLAN

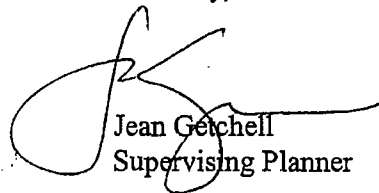
Dear Ms. Urlie:

Staff has reviewed the referenced document and has the following comments:

1. Page 3-22 and Table 3-2. The Basin is now a nonattainment transitional area for the State ozone standard. **A-1**
2. Page 3-27, para. 1. Recommend the following addition: "The 2004 AQMP uses the same 2004 population projects and travel data assumptions for the period through 2030 as do the three plans." **A-2**

Thank you for the opportunity to review the document. Please do not hesitate to call if you have any questions.

Sincerely,



Jean Getchell
 Supervising Planner

COMMENTS AND RESPONSES

Letter A: Jean Getchell, Monterey Bay Unified Air Pollution Control District, February 22, 2005.

COMMENT A-1: 1. Page 3-22 and Table 3-2. The Basin is now nonattainment transitional for the State ozone standard.

RESPONSE A-1: Comment noted. In response to this comment, the text of the first sentence in the second paragraph under **Current Air Quality** on Draft EIR page 3-22 has been modified to read as follows:

“Under the California Clean Air Act, the NCCAB is a ~~moderate~~ nonattainment transitional area for the State ozone AAQS.”

In response to this comment, the entry under “State” on the line for “Ozone (O³) – 1 hour” in **Table 3-2: Attainment Status of the North Central Coast Air Basin** on Draft EIR page 3-23 has been modified to read as follows:

“~~Moderate~~ Nonattainment Transitional”

COMMENT A-2: 2. Page 3-27, para. 1. Recommend the following addition: “The 2004 AQMP uses the same 2004 population projections and travel data assumptions for the period through 2030 as do the three plans.”

RESPONSE A-2: Comment noted. In response to this comment, the text of fourth sentence in the first paragraph on Draft EIR page 3-27 has been modified to read as follows:

“The 2004 AQMP uses the same 2004 population projections and travel data assumptions for the period through 2030 as do the three plans.”



ASSOCIATION OF MONTEREY BAY AREA GOVERNMENTS

March 10, 2005

Ms. Kathy Urlie
Association of Monterey Bay Area Governments
PO Box 809
Marina, CA 93933

**Re: MCH# 020526- Notice of Availability of Draft Environmental Impact Report for the
2005 Monterey Bay Metropolitan Transportation Plan, 2005
Monterey County Regional Transportation Plan, and 2005 Santa
Cruz County Regional Transportation Plan**

Dear Ms. Urlie:

AMBAG's Regional Clearinghouse circulated a summary of notice of your environmental document to our member agencies and interested parties for review and comment.

The AMBAG Board of Directors considered the project on **March 9, 2005** and has no comments **B-1** at this time.

Thank you for complying with the Clearinghouse process.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Nicolas Papadakis", is written over a horizontal line. The signature is fluid and cursive.

Nicolas Papadakis
Executive Director

COMMENTS AND RESPONSES

Letter B: Nicolas Papadakis, Association of Monterey Bay Area Governments, March 10, 2005.

*COMMENT B-1: The AMBAG Board of Directors considered the project on **March 9, 2005** and has no comments at this time.*

RESPONSE B-1: Comment noted. No response is necessary.

Letter C: Steve Lustgarden, March 17, 2005.

COMMENT C-1: I believe that there are many positive components to this plan. However, I strongly oppose any measures to widen any portion of Highway One. I believe that any additional development of this Highway will only encourage further growth in our community, further reliance on automobiles, both of which will degrade the quality of life in our community. Thank you for considering my viewpoint.

RESPONSE C-1: Comments and opinions noted. As indicated on Draft EIR page 5-6, a relatively high level of residential and non-residential development is anticipated within the region through the year 2030, and much of this growth is projected to occur regardless of the extent to which the three plans are implemented. Adoption of the three plans, in itself, would not be expected to alter the projected magnitude of regional residential and non-residential growth. Transportation system improvement projects identified in the three plans (including improvements to Highway 1) may indirectly increase growth pressure by increasing transportation system capacity. Quantification of any growth-inducing effects associated with specific projects (e.g., those related to Highway 1 improvements) would need to be considered as part of the project-specific environmental evaluation to be conducted by each individual implementing agency as designs for such projects are developed and brought forward for review.

Because the planned Highway 1 Widening project is identified as an HOV lane project, it is anticipated that the project will increase carpool and bus use. However, as indicated on Draft EIR page 3-107, if added capacity results in travelers switching from public transportation or other commute alternatives to using single occupancy vehicles, diversion from other modes would be expected to increase vehicle activity. It is assumed that, on balance, implementation of the three plans would increase transit ridership and the utilization of other commute alternatives, and would, accordingly, reduce the number of daily vehicle trips within the region. Quantification of any traffic-inducing effects associated with specific projects (e.g., those related to Highway 1 improvements) would need to be considered as part of the project-specific environmental evaluation to be conducted by each individual implementing agency as designs for such projects are developed and brought forward for review, in combination with development decisions by individual local jurisdictions.

