



SAN FRANCISCO PLANNING DEPARTMENT

Executive Summary Transportation Impact Analysis Guidelines – Update

HEARING DATE: SEPTEMBER 28, 2017

Project Name: **Transportation Impact Analysis Guidelines for Environmental Review – Update**

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Recommendation: **None – Informational Only**

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PURPOSE OF HEARING:

The Planning Department uses the Transportation Impact Analysis Guidelines for assessing project's transportation impacts as part of the California Environmental Quality Act. The department is undergoing comprehensive updates to the guidelines, which the department last updated in 2002. The purpose of this informational hearing is to provide an understanding on the transportation topics within the guidelines, a brief overview of the update, status of the update, feedback sought, and the anticipated outcomes and schedule.

The public can find more information and sign up to receive notifications from the department about updates here: <http://sf-planning.org/transportation-impact-analysis-guidelines-environmental-review-update#resources>.

THE WAY IT IS NOW:

The Environmental Planning division within the Planning Department reviews projects for potential impacts on the environment, a process known as environmental review. The Planning Department conducts environmental review pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). As part of environmental review, the Planning Department reviews background technical studies, such as transportation impact studies, to assess a project's effects on the physical environment.

These background technical studies support the conclusions of the environmental impact evaluation and guide decision-makers during project approval. To assist in the preparation of transportation impact studies, the Planning Department provides to consultants and city staff a guidance document, the Transportation Impact Analysis Guidelines. The Planning Department periodically updates the guidelines, with the last update in 2002.

The current guidelines updated and revised the Guidelines for Environmental Review: Transportation Impacts (July, 1991) and Interim Transportation Impact Analysis Guidelines for Environmental Review (January 2000). The current guidelines cover the following transportation topics (in the order presented in the guidelines):

- Traffic
- Transit
- Parking
- Pedestrian
- Bicycle
- Freight Loading and Service
- Passenger Loading
- Construction

To assess these impacts, the department estimates how many trips people in newer developments may take, the ways they travel, and their common destinations based on the findings of the Citywide Travel Behavior Survey - Employees and Employers (May, 1993); the Citywide Travel Behavior Survey - Visitor Travel Behavior (August, 1993); revolving five-year estimates from US Census, American Community Survey data; San Francisco County Transportation Authority San Francisco Chained Activity Model, which is based upon, among other sources, observed behavior from California Household Travel Survey (2010-2012), and major San Francisco transportation studies.

The guidelines are just that. The Planning Commission does not formally adopt the guidelines. The department may use the guidelines for multiple projects, but the department has discretion on applying specifics within the guidelines on a project by project basis. The guidelines provide basic details regarding methodologies and standards, but individual transportation study scopes of work are required to provide a level of detail tailored to fit the size and complexity of transportation issues associated with particular projects. Once the department approves a scope of work, the specific direction contained within that scope will provide a more precise focus than that which appears in the guidelines.

Since 2002, the department has instituted various updates to the conditions, data, and methodology within the guidelines. Records of these updates exist in various materials. One substantial example of updates that occurred was a March 2016 Planning Commission resolution that removed automobile delay from CEQA and added vehicle miles traveled as a transportation criterion. Since that time, the state has not issued subsequent guidance and the department has taken a leadership role in working with other jurisdictions on updates to their own transportation criteria. The state also changed the CEQA Guidelines to remove parking, by itself, as a significant impact under CEQA.

Also since that time, San Francisco has experienced changes in the demographics of the population, the types of new jobs, and the cost of housing, among other variables that affect travel behavior. Some of these changes create greater constraints on our transportation systems, including more competition for curb space. One of the major changes has been with emerging mobility services and technologies that have changed the way some people travel (using transportation network companies such as Uber and Lyft) and interact with goods (home deliveries). These changes also affect the percentages of how people travel (known as mode splits in the transportation analysis methodology). For example, we understand anecdotally that people may be shifting from using their own vehicles or transit to instead use transportation network companies such as Uber and Lyft.

THE WAY IT WOULD BE:

The department is in the midst of updating the guidelines comprehensively. The purpose of the update is to achieve high quality deliverables, meaningful analysis, efficient reviews, and better project outcomes through clear standards, methodology, and criteria; understandable, transparent, and predictable process; updated mitigation measures, designs, outcomes, and policies; user-friendly figures; and illustrative examples of project analysis.

To address some of the changes since 2002 described in earlier paragraphs, San Francisco has undertaken a substantial amount of planning and policy work the last 15 years. For example, the San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency was only three months old when the department last updated the guidelines; now the SFMTA includes a planning division. Over these years, interagency coordination to address issues has also improved. This includes coming together on things like transportation ordinances; developing land use and transportation area plans together; creating an inter-agency team that reviews projects compliance with the better streets plan; and embarking on a long-range transportation vision for San Francisco. Some of these planning and policies changes have affected the CEQA transportation review process. For example, our analysis has placed greater emphasis on safety, in reaction to San Francisco's Vision Zero commitments. On the other hand, the work of these agencies and some of these policies result in fewer projects with significant transportation impacts and sometimes avoid them altogether. Therefore, the department is focusing the guidelines updates on addressing CEQA issues and not focusing on other issues that San Francisco can better address through policies, programs, and projects.

Potential Updates

This update may change process for transportation review, thresholds of significance, and analysis methodology concerning transportation impacts. It may also affect the transportation review process. At this point in time, staff is considering the following substantive updates to the following topics (in the order the department will present the topics in the guidelines):

- Process – scoping out topics from transportation review earlier in the process based upon the characteristics of the project, site, and surroundings (e.g., through a checklist)
- Walking/Accessibility– Assessing the need to conduct a quantitative capacity analysis and update definitions and examples of hazards and accessibility impediments.
- Bicycling– Assessing the need to update definitions and examples of hazards and accessibility impediments.
- Transit – Assessing the need to conduct a quantitative capacity analysis and revisiting the need, methodology and thresholds for transit delay.
- Emergency Access – Update definitions and examples of inadequate emergency access.
- Loading – Refine estimates of passenger and commercial loading demand, attempting to account for rise in for-hire vehicles and e-commerce deliveries.
- Vehicle Miles Traveled/Induced Auto Travel – Potential quantification of the relationship between parking supply and induced automobile travel.
- Traffic Hazards – Update definitions of types of traffic hazards as well and standards that can be implemented to potentially avoid traffic hazards (which may be incorporated into walking/accessibility and bicycling).
- Construction – Consideration of the effects of excavation on overall project construction and the resulting duration/intensity of construction phases.

- Parking – Further updates that reflect Senate Bill 743, including potentially a checklist or map-based approach for when projects will not require a parking demand and supply estimate and secondary effect analysis.

PROCESS

For this effort, the department is undertaking a few different efforts to inform the updates, as described below.

Travel Demand

Substantial data collection and analysis is currently underway, primarily at newer development sites. This data collection will result in the creation of refined estimates of how many trips people in newer developments take, the ways they travel, and their common destinations.

The department contracted with a transportation consulting firm, Fehr & Peers, to develop a methodology for collecting data and updating the travel demand methodology used in the guidelines. Fehr & Peers has collected the following data and are in the process of analyzing and interpreting this data in order to update:

- The number of trips people in newer developments take using 24-hour person counts using cameras at all access points to 81 sites across San Francisco (including 19 office, 11 hotel, 30 retail, and 22 residential sites);
- The estimates of passenger and commercial loading demand, using 24-hour time lapse recordings (5-minute resolution) at one designated loading zone for 70 sites; and
- The way people travel (using transit, car, bike etc.) and their destinations, using PM peak period (3PM – 7PM) intercept surveys (i.e., by intercepting people to ask questions) at 72 sites.

The department will review the results of the analysis and determine what estimates to incorporate into the guidelines update or whether the department or others will need to collect additional data to provide such estimates.

Kick-Off Meeting and Survey

The department held a kick-off meeting for the guidelines update on July 27, 2017. We invited several local and regional government agencies (i.e., the SF Fire Department, SF Police Department, SF Municipal Transportation Agency, SF Public Works, SF Public Utilities Commission, SF Department of Public Health, SF Office of Community Investment and Infrastructure, University of California – SF, Mayor’s Office of Disability and Mayor’s Office and Community and Workforce Development, SF County Transportation Authority, Caltrans, BART, Caltrain, SamTrans, and AC Transit) and environmental planning and transportation planning consultants.

At the meeting, the department presented an overview of the guidelines update and a topic by topic technical breakdown of current guidelines and what the department is considering updating in terms of analysis methodology and thresholds of significance. Following the presentation, attendees could attend breakout sessions for each topic to provide technical approach feedback. We also followed up with a survey soliciting general feedback, as well as adding questions soliciting specific technical feedback on each topic based on what we heard from attendees at the kick-off meeting. We received approximately 30 responses to the follow-up survey when we closed the feedback period on August 25, 2017.

From the kick-off meeting and survey, we received feedback about some recurring themes, which are themes we regularly encounter from members of the public commenting on CEQA documents: how to analyze the impacts of Transportation Network Companies (e.g., loading and vehicle miles traveled), loading issues, particularly related to people with disabilities and senior citizens, and project's compliance with various codes and policies.

Planning Commission Hearing

One of the basic purposes of CEQA is to inform decision makers and the public about the potential, significant environmental effects of activities *before* decision makers decide to approve or deny a project. The decision making process since 2002 has likely become more complicated. However, the fundamental purposes of CEQA have not changed. Therefore, a goal of the outcomes from the guidelines update is to provide informative analysis to the Planning Commission and the public regarding the CEQA transportation impacts of projects. For this hearing, we are soliciting feedback on how the department can do just that. Members of the public can provide feedback at the Planning Commission Hearing or by sending an email to CPC.TransportationReview@sfgov.org until by 5 PM on October 20, 2017.

Future

Based upon feedback from the Planning Commission at this hearing, the public by October 20, and earlier outreach efforts, the department will summarize feedback received into a memorandum outlining which topics the department is considering as part of the guidelines update. The department will categorize feedback not related to CEQA and will forward that feedback to agencies who may be responsible for addressing it. In addition, the department will continue to engage on the guidelines updates consultants (e.g., brownbags) and San Francisco agencies, particularly the San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency and San Francisco County Transportation Authority, and regional and state transportation agencies as relevant.

The department will issue a series of memorandums in 2017 and 2018 that provide updates to topics within the guidelines. Staff will be posting these memorandums, as well as other relevant materials, to this webpage: <http://sf-planning.org/transportation-impact-analysis-guidelines-environmental-review-update#resources>.

REQUIRED COMMISSION ACTION

Informational item. No action required.