

**California Senate Bill 743 – Is Level of Service Obsolete?**

**ITE Joint Western & Midwestern District Meeting  
June 29 – July 2, 2014 – Rapid City, SD**

## WHY SB 743?

- Governor Brown signed Senate Bill 743 in September 2013, which made several changes to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) for projects located in areas served by transit (i.e., transit-oriented development or TOD).
- Those changes direct the Governor's Office of Planning and Research to develop a new approach for analyzing the transportation impacts under CEQA.
- SB 743 also creates a new exemption for certain projects that are consistent with a Specific Plan and, eliminates the need to evaluate aesthetic and parking impacts of a project, in some circumstances.

**Transportation Impact  
Analysis Gets a Failing  
Grade  
When it Comes to  
Climate Change and  
Smart Growth**



## What is Level of Service (LOS)?

- **Defined in the Highway Capacity Manual (HCM)**
- **Description of Operating Conditions**
- **Most Often Used to Describe Delay to Vehicles at Intersections**
- *Typically Reported for the Peak Hour*
- *Peak Hour Measured for the Peak 15 Minutes*
- **Acceptable Thresholds set Locally, Usually for Peak Hour**
- **Very Auto-centric**

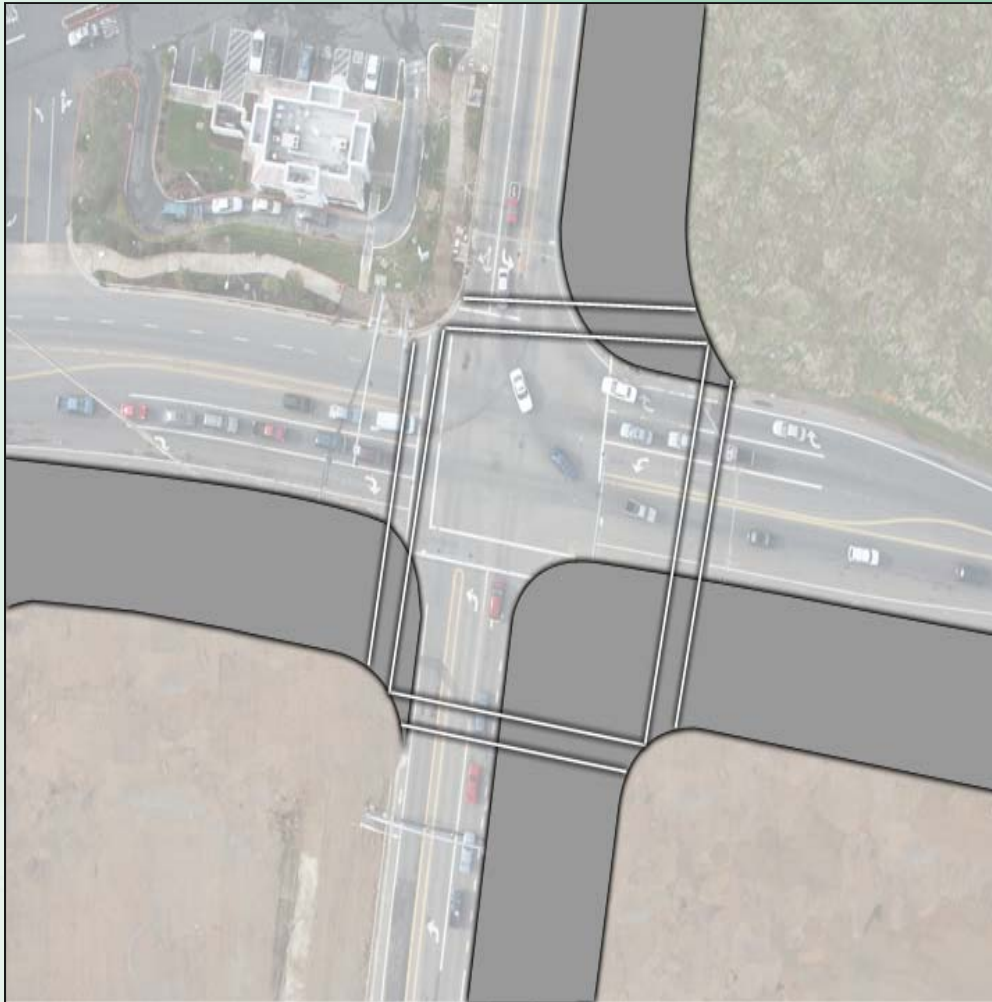
## Isolated vs. System-wide Analysis



## Consequences of Current Practice



# Consequences of Current Practice



## Widening for LOS C

- Longer crosswalks
- Loss of riparian habitat
- Increased impervious surface
- Can't build half a lane

• *Higher vehicle speeds*

• *Greater consumption of physical space*

# Physical Space



**Auto Space**



# Physical Space



**Person Space  
in Auto**

# Physical Space



**Person Space  
in Bus**

# LOS Threshold Trade-offs



Other Modes



Air Quality/  
Climate Change



Open Space



Transit-Oriented  
Development



Infill Development



Costs

## **SB 743 Objectives to be met**

- Promote reduction of greenhouse gas emissions
- Promote the development of multi-modal transportation networks.
- Promote a diversity of land uses

## What SB 743 Does

- Network Expansion is no longer the focus
- LOS not as relevant
- VMT may be more relevant – land use as part of the solution

## What SB 743 Does Not Do

- Does *not* prevent locals from considering capacity/congestion issues
- Does *not* affect existing GPs
- Does *not* affect existing fee programs
- Does *not* affect projects that are already in the pipeline

## What is OPR looking for in a metric?

SB 743: “criteria shall promote...”

1. “...Reduction of GHGs”
2. “...Development of multimodal transportation networks”
3. “...A diversity of land uses”

## Candidate Metrics Examined in *Preliminary Evaluation*\*

- Vehicle Miles Traveled\*
- Automobile Trips Generated\*
- Multi-modal Level of Service
- Fuel use
- Vehicle Hours Traveled
- Presumption of less than significant transportation impact based on location

\* Recommended for consideration by the statute



## Comments on LOS

- Some expressed support for moving away from LOS in CEQA
  - Counter to infill priority
  - Counter to environmental protection
  - Calculating LOS is cumbersome
- Some supported keeping LOS in CEQA
  - Familiar, used in other contexts
  - Tied to resident concerns
  - Tied to impact fees
- Broad recognition of LOS shortcomings

## Comments on VMT

- This alternative received the most attention
  - Widespread acceptance within TPAs
  - Mixed opinions on replacing LOS with VMT beyond TPAs
- Concerns
  - Accuracy of estimates and models
  - Availability of tools and models
  - How to link project VMT increases to transportation network improvements
  - Does not address operational issues
  - Duplicates other analyses

## Comments on VMT (cont.)

- Benefits of a VMT system
  - Could lead to better system-wide planning
  - Better relationship to environmental impacts
  - Consistent with other statewide and regional goals
  - VMT is already used in other analyses (e.g. GHG assessment)
  - VMT has arisen as the leading contender to replace LOS. Now questions as to the measurement of VMT.

## Comments on Other Alternatives

- Little support for Fuel Use, VHT, MMLOS
- Support, and some concern, re location-based presumptions

## Comments on Geographic Scope

- Potential confusion that may result from adopting an alternative in some areas and not others
- Concern about projects that might straddle a TPA boundary, or have impacts across TPA boundaries
- Broader alignment of metric with environmental benefit, other state goals
- Concern about VMT mitigation in areas that are not served by transit

## Next Steps

- OPR develops draft guidelines by July 1, 2014 – delayed one or two weeks
- OPR Submits draft guidelines to Resources Agency
- Resources agency takes the guidelines through the formal rulemaking process
- Finalized as soon as early 2015

Thank you!