2.2 Growth

2.2.1 Regulatory Setting
The Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations, which established the steps necessary to comply with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969, require evaluation of the potential environmental effects of all proposed federal activities and programs. This provision includes a requirement to examine indirect effects, which may occur in areas beyond the immediate influence of a proposed action and at some time in the future. The CEQ regulations (40 Code of Federal Regulations [CFR] 1508.8) refer to these consequences as indirect impacts. Indirect impacts may include changes in land use, economic vitality, and population density, which are all elements of growth.

2.2.2 Affected Environment
The regional study area for the growth impact analysis is the County of Orange because SR-74 is a main east-west route in south Orange County and the project segment connects Interstate 5 (I-5) with Antonio Parkway/Avenida La Pata, routes which are used to access south Orange County areas. The local study area specifically focuses on a 0.25-mile buffer around the project area, which includes the City of San Juan Capistrano (City) and unincorporated Orange County (see Figure 2.2-1).

The project is located in a largely suburban area. Undeveloped land in the vicinity of the project limits is largely designated as open space and is not designated for future growth.

This growth impact analysis is based on the Community Impact Assessment (April 2019) prepared for the proposed project and follows the “First-cut Screening” guidelines provided in the California Department of Transportation’s (Caltrans) Guidance for Preparers of Growth-Related, Indirect Impact Analyses (May 2006), which provides a First-cut Screening approach to growth impact analysis that identifies the need for and the extent of growth-related impact analysis based on the responses to various questions related to a project’s potential to change accessibility, to influence growth, the potential for project-related growth to be reasonably foreseeable, and its potential to impact resources of concern.

As shown in Table 2.2.1, the City is projected to experience population growth of 12.7 percent and Orange County is projected to experience population growth of 19.4 percent from 2010 to 2045.
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FIGURE 2.2-1

LEGEND

Project Limits
Study Area
City Boundary

SR-74 Lower Ortega Highway Widening Project
Growth Study Area
12-ORA-74 PM 10/2.1
EA 086920

SOURCE: SCAG (2016); ESRI (2018); Caltrans (4/3/2019)

SOURCE: SCAG (2016); ESRI (2018); Caltrans (4/3/2019)

General Plan Land Use
City of San Juan Capistrano (2018)
- Community Park
- General Open Space
- Open Space Recreation
- Very Low Density Residential
- Low Density Residential
- Medium Low Density Residential
- Medium Density Residential

County of Orange (2016)
- Open Space
- Suburban Residential
- Urban Activity Center

Project Limits
Study Area
City Boundary

0 1000 2000
0 1000 2000

I:\CDT1609\GIS\MXD\Task41_SR74_LowerOrtega_Env\GrowthStudyArea.mxd (4/30/2019)
Chapter 2  Affected Environment, Environmental Consequences, and Avoidance, Minimization, and/or Mitigation Measures

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Table 2.2.1: Population Estimates and Projections, 2010–2045

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<th>2010&lt;sup&gt;1&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
<th>2018&lt;sup&gt;2&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
<th>2025&lt;sup&gt;3&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
<th>2035&lt;sup&gt;3&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
<th>2045&lt;sup&gt;3&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>City of San Juan Capistrano</td>
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<td>36,064</td>
<td>37,073</td>
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<td>Orange County</td>
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<td>3,220,451</td>
<td>3,368,151</td>
<td>3,503,764</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Source: Community Impact Assessment (Caltrans 2019).
<sup>1</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, 2010 Census.
<sup>2</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, 2013–2017 American Community Survey.
<sup>3</sup> Center for Demographic Research, California State University, Fullerton, Orange County Council of Governments, Technical Advisory Committee; Growth and Population rates are based on Regional Statistical Area (RSA) D-40 that includes San Juan Capistrano.

2.2.3 Environmental Consequences

2.2.3.1 Temporary Impacts

**Build Alternative 2**

Any potential growth-related effects of Build Alternative 2 would be permanent. There would be no temporary growth-inducing impacts under Build Alternative 2.

**No Build Alternative**

No improvements to SR-74 would occur under the No Build Alternative. Therefore, the No Build Alternative would not result in any temporary growth-related impacts.

2.2.3.2 Permanent Impacts

**Build Alternative 2**

The assessment of the potential growth-related impacts of Build Alternative 2 was conducted using the First-cut Screening analysis approach, including assessment of whether further analysis would be necessary based on consideration of the following four questions.

*How, if at all, does the proposed project potentially change accessibility?*

Build Alternative 2 would improve an existing highway facility and would not alter access to or from this facility. The proposed improvements would not provide a new transportation facility or new access points to previously inaccessible areas. Build Alternative 2 would help to alleviate existing and forecasted traffic congestion in the study area, resulting in improved operations on SR-74. Additionally, Build Alternative 2 would help to accommodate projected future (2045) traffic volumes in the study area consistent with adopted local land use and transportation plans (as discussed in Section 2.1, Land Use). Therefore, the project does not have the potential to change accessibility.
How, if at all, do the project type, project location, and growth pressure potentially influence growth?

Build Alternative 2 is consistent with the City's General Plan and the 2018 Orange County Transportation Authority (OCTA) Master Plan of Arterial Highways (MPAH), which are intended to account for planned growth within the study area. In addition, the County's General Plan will be updated for consistency with the MPAH. Furthermore, there is limited land available outside the approved Ranch Plan Planned Development Areas for new development within the study area. Any changes to the amount of development in the Ranch Plan would require additional environmental review and would not influence development in eastern Orange County. Build Alternative 2 would support planned growth but would not influence additional growth within the study area.

Implementation of Build Alternative 2 within the project limits would not have any growth-inducing effects in the immediate area because the adjacent land is built out with and/or entitled for suburban, residential uses or recreational facilities. Build Alternative 2 would accommodate approved and planned growth in the study area (see Table 2.17.1 in Section 2.17, Cumulative Impacts, for a list of reasonably foreseeable development projects within the study area) because it would add capacity to this segment of SR-74 and thereby help to alleviate existing and forecasted congestion in the study area. SR-74 is currently used for commuting to and from southern Orange and Riverside Counties. SR-74 is near capacity during commute hours and would not generate more commuting to Orange County. Hence, Build Alternative 2 would not influence development in western Riverside County.

Available land for development in the study area has either mostly been approved for development (see Table 2.17.1) or has been designated as reserve lands as part of the Ranch Plan. Additionally, as described in Section 2.1, Land Use, Build Alternative 2 is consistent with the growth-related objectives and policies of the General Plans of the City and the County of Orange. Build Alternative 2 would not change development densities or construction schedules for other planned projects, and no development is predicated on the project being built.

Due to the current General Plan land use designations and objectives, Build Alternative 2 is unlikely to alter the historic and projected growth patterns within the City or the County of Orange and would not encourage growth on undeveloped and
unplanned land. Build Alternative 2 would accommodate existing and planned growth but would not influence growth beyond what is currently planned.

**Is project-related growth reasonably foreseeable as defined in NEPA?**

Under NEPA, indirect impacts need only be evaluated if they are reasonably foreseeable, rather than remote and speculative. As discussed above, Build Alternative 2 would not influence growth beyond those development projects currently planned for the area (Table 2.17.1), and development anticipated by both the City’s and County’s General Plan land use designations. Immediately east of the City/County border, development in unincorporated Orange County is approved as part of the Ranch Plan. Widening the SR-74 would serve this planned growth.

The Ranch Plan is accounted for in the County growth projections and was included in the 2025 opening year and 2045 design year traffic volumes. Build Alternative 2 would not provide capacity beyond what is needed to serve existing and approved development; therefore, it would not encourage intensification of existing and planned land uses. Build Alternative 2 would accommodate planned growth and development in the surrounding areas, meeting a project purpose outlined in Chapter 1.

Growth on the Ranch Plan property would not be able to exceed the level already approved by the County because restrictions associated with the Ranch Plan approvals limit the amount of overall development. This growth level has been established through provisions of the General Plan and zoning. Infrastructure to serve the Ranch Plan development will be provided as part of the land development project, and the impacts of the required infrastructure improvements have been addressed as part of the environmental documentation for the Ranch Plan.

Build Alternative 2 would not influence the rate, type, or amount of growth in the study area. Therefore, no reasonably foreseeable project-related growth would occur under Build Alternative 2.

**If there is project-related growth, how, if at all, will that impact resources of concern?**

As indicated above, Build Alternative 2 would not influence the rate, type, or amount of growth that would otherwise occur; hence, the reasonably foreseeable growth anticipated to occur in the study area is not project-related.
Because Build Alternative 2 would not result in growth-inducing impacts, no analysis of those potential impacts beyond what is provided above in the First-cut Screening analysis is necessary.

**No Build Alternative**
No improvements to SR-74 would occur under the No Build Alternative. Therefore, the No Build Alternative would not result in any permanent growth-related impacts.

**2.2.4 Avoidance, Minimization, and/or Mitigation Measures**
As the Build Alternative 2 would not result in any adverse temporary or permanent growth-inducing impacts, no avoidance, minimization, or mitigation measures are required.