



Q&A: Caltrans Guidance Documents for SB 743 Implementation

1) What is SB 743 and what changes to Caltrans activities will it bring?

Senate Bill (SB) 743 (Steinberg, 2013) is an amendment to the California Environmental Quality Act that added PRC Section 21099, "CHAPTER 2.7. Modernization of Transportation Analysis for Transit-Oriented Infill Projects." Statutory changes were reflected in amendments to the State's CEQA Guidelines in 2018, better aligning CEQA with the State's climate and air quality goals. It is changing Environmental Impact Report (EIR) analysis of transportation impacts associated with both land development and infrastructure projects.

For Caltrans, SB 743 means major changes in two activities:

- CEQA analysis of capacity-increasing transportation projects on the State Highway System, and
- Review of local land use projects' potential impact to the state highway system through the Caltrans Local Development-Intergovernmental Review (LD-IGR) program.

These changes follow both the CEQA Guidelines approved by the Office of Administrative Law and technical advice prepared by the Governor's Office of Planning and Research (<http://opr.ca.gov/ceqa/updates/sb-743/>). Caltrans supports implementation of the guidance from these State Agency partners. Key changes to the analysis of transportation impacts include:

- A key change for the LD-IGR program is that CEQA documents will now consider different types of transportation impacts than previously examined. When analyzing the impact of VMT on the State Highway System resulting from local land use projects, the focus will no longer be on traffic at intersections and roadways immediately around project sites. Instead, the focus will be on how projects are likely to influence the overall amount of automobile use. SB 743 specifies that "...automobile delay, as described solely by level of service or similar measures of vehicular capacity or traffic congestion, shall not be considered a significant impact on the environment" (California Public Resources Code Section 21099).
- When analyzing the likely impact of transportation investments, Caltrans will also be examining VMT, using methods that reflect a phenomenon called "induced vehicle travel." We see the induced vehicle travel phenomenon repeatedly in urban areas when a freeway project adds capacity, but traffic relief is short lived. This happens because drivers make new trips to take advantage of new capacity – driving more, at different times or on different routes.



These changes aim to reduce automobile dependency by supporting infill development and increasing use of more sustainable modes including carpooling, cycling, walking, and transit. These changes are essential to supporting our growing population and economy while meeting climate and air quality goals.

2) Where can I find guidance on how Caltrans will consider VMT when evaluating transportation impacts of land development projects?

Caltrans is in the process of publishing guidance on how to evaluate the impact of development projects using vehicle miles traveled through its draft document *VMT-Focused Transportation Impact Study Guide (TISG)*. The TISG is guidance to Caltrans Districts, lead agencies, developers and consultants regarding Caltrans review of a land use project or plan's transportation analysis using a VMT metric. Read the draft TISG on the Caltrans [SB 743 website](#).

An informal feedback period regarding the draft TISG has been conducted, and a finalized TISG will be published in advance of July 1, 2020. The Caltrans Local Intergovernmental Development Review Program will develop training for Caltrans staff to implement the TISG into practice.

3) Where can I find guidance on how to analyze VMT for transportation projects on the state highway system (SHS)?

Caltrans is in the process of publishing guidance to assist Caltrans Districts in identifying the best approach for analyzing VMT (induced travel) under CEQA in various settings and for projects on the SHS through its draft document *Transportation Analysis Framework (TAF)*. The draft TAF can be accessed via the Caltrans [SB 743 website](#).

An informal feedback period regarding the draft TAF will close on June 15, 2020, and a finalized TAF will be published in advance of September 15, 2020. The Caltrans SB 743 Implementation Team will develop training opportunities for Caltrans staff to implement TAF guidance into practice.

4) What is the applicability of the Caltrans transportation analysis approach for projects sponsored and funded by others?

Capacity-increasing projects on the State Highway System will be evaluated based on VMT impact regardless of funding source or project sponsor. Widening and other capacity increasing projects found to have significant impacts based on assessment of VMT attributable to the project will require mitigation. If mitigation is not adequate to reduce the impact to a level of insignificance, the Lead Agency may make findings and adopt a statement of overriding considerations.



5) Where can I find guidance on how to determine transportation impact significance under CEQA for projects on the state highway system (SHS)?

Caltrans is in the process of publishing guidance supporting Caltrans' CEQA practitioners in making CEQA significance determinations for transportation impacts on the SHS through its draft document *Transportation Impacts Analysis under CEQA for Projects on the State Highway System (TAC)*. *The draft TAC can be accessed via the Caltrans [SB 743 website](#).

An informal feedback period regarding the draft TAC will close on June 15, 2020, and a finalized TAC will be published in advance of September 15, 2020. The Caltrans SB 743 Implementation Team will develop training opportunities for Caltrans staff to implement TAC guidance into practice.

6) Will there be any training provided for Caltrans and external staff regarding SB 743 implementation?

Yes, the Caltrans SB 743 Implementation Team will develop internal training opportunities for Caltrans employees to implement TISG, TAF and TAC guidance into practice. All internal training announcements will be sent via email to District Directors and relevant groups of Caltrans employee participants. Any external training resources provided by Caltrans will be posted to the Caltrans [SB 743 website](#).

The SB 743 team will hold informational webinars regarding the guidance documents (TISG, TAF, and TAC). More information regarding the webinars will be announced via email. The Webinar recordings will be posted to the Caltrans [SB 743 website](#), accessible to the public.

7) I've been working on my project for the past year or so; will I have to analyze induced VMT on my project to comply with SB 743?

Possibly—please read the Caltrans document *VMT CEQA Significance Determinations for State Highway System Projects Implementation Timeline Memorandum* via the [Caltrans SB 743 website](#) to get a clear understanding of whether the timing of your project requires induced VMT analysis. Capacity-increasing projects on the SHS that will reach Caltrans' Milestone 020 on or after September 15, 2020, the implementation deadline, will include a VMT-based transportation impact significance determination in the draft environmental document. Some environmental reviews that reached Caltrans' Milestone 020 after December 2018 and before September 15, 2020 may be revised to include VMT analysis, as discussed in the Implementation Timeline Memorandum.

Please note that many types of projects will be unaffected by the use of VMT as a measure of transportation impacts because they are assumed to not lead to a substantial increase in vehicle travel ([see list of projects in the "Technical Advisory](#)



[on Evaluating Transportation Impacts in CEQA," Governor's Office of Planning and Research, December 2018, pages 20-21.\)](#)

8) Where can I find more information about mitigating induced VMT?

Caltrans is in the process of developing and organizing research, materials, and best practices related to mitigating induced VMT. The [Caltrans SB 743 website](#) has mitigation resources posted, but expect more resources to be posted in the coming months. Additionally, Caltrans is supporting multiple research studies regarding mitigation of induced VMT.

More Q&A can be found on the [SB 743 Website](#)