

7.15 TRAFFIC AND TRANSPORTATION (REVISED)

7.15 TRAFFIC AND TRANSPORTATION (REVISED)

7.15.1 INTRODUCTION

7.15.1.1 Content

The proposed project analyzed in the Monterey Plus EIR was the Monterey Amendment and the Settlement Agreement. The Monterey Plus EIR considered five “elements” of the Monterey Amendment as follows:

- Changes in the procedures for allocation of Table A water and surplus water among the SWP contractors;*
- Approval to permanent transfers of 130,000 acre feet and retirement of 45,000 acre-feet of SWP long-term water supply contracts’ Table A amounts;*
- Transfer of property known as the “Kern Fan Element property” in Kern County;*
- Water supply management practices; and*
- Restructured water rates.*

This REIR has changed the description of the Kern Fan Element property transfer to be:

- Transfer of property known as the “Kern Fan Element property” in Kern County and its development and continued use and operation as a locally owned and operated groundwater banking and recovery project.*

There are no revisions to the other elements of the Monterey Amendment or of the Settlement Agreement, and no changes have been made relating to them in this REIR. (See discussion in Introduction/Executive Summary.)

This REIR does not supersede the analysis of the Monterey Plus EIR but supplements the Monterey Plus EIR. The Monterey Plus EIR focused on the transfer of the KFE property, which was fully analyzed in the Monterey Plus EIR. This REIR did not identify any new impacts or changes to impacts caused by the transfer of the KFE property. Therefore, this REIR focuses on the development and continued use and operation of the KWB as a locally owned and operated groundwater banking and recovery project (“KWB activities”).

The Monterey Plus DEIR Section 7.15 identified potential impacts to traffic and transportation as a result of the transfer of the Kern Fan Element. Text from DEIR Section 7.15 that discusses KWB activities is copied below and shows revisions to this section. All other text in DEIR Section 7.15 remains unchanged. In addition to the impacts discussed below, to the extent they apply, indirect impacts as a result of population growth are presented in Chapter 8, Growth-Inducing Impacts, and indirect impacts from potential cropping changes are presented in Section 10.1, Cumulative Environmental Impacts.

Table 7.15-1A identifies the potentially affected environmental resources from impacts of KWB activities on traffic and transportation.

TABLE 7.15-1A

IMPACTS OF ~~KWB ACTIVITIES~~ PROPOSED PROJECT ELEMENTS ON TRAFFIC AND TRANSPORTATION

Proposed Project Element	Potentially Affected Environmental Resources	Impact Number
Transfer of Kern Fan Element lands, and <u>KWB activities</u>	Changes in traffic patterns associated with construction and operation of groundwater storage facilities in Kern Fan Element	7.15-3

During public review of the ~~NOP for this~~ Notice of Preparation for the Monterey Plus EIR, interested parties submitted no comments on transportation resources.

7.15.1.2 Analytical Method

The assessment of impacts to transportation resources was conducted in accordance with standard professional practices. Factors considered in the analysis include:

- Substantial changes in traffic and circulation patterns as a result of KWB activities.

This analysis included a review of the environmental setting, impacts, and mitigation measures related to traffic and transportation, to the extent they apply, presented in the 1997 Monterey Initial Study and Addendum (see Appendix 7-6a).

7.15.1.3 Standards of Significance

The following standards of significance are based on Appendix G of the CEQA Guidelines. For the purposes of this REIR, impacts to traffic and circulation patterns would be considered potentially significant if the KWB activities proposed project would:

- cause an increase in traffic which is substantial in relation to the existing traffic load and capacity of the street system; or
- substantially exceed, either individually or cumulatively, a level of service standard established by the county congestion management agency for designated roads or highways.

7.15.2 ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

7.15.2.1 Physical Setting in 1995

Prior to the Department's purchase of the KFE property in 1988, approximately 17,068 acres of the property was under extensive cultivation (see Revised Appendix E). The remaining property contained 1,515 acres of isolated sensitive native plant communities and 1,317 acres of non-native grassland, which had been leased for oil recovery facilities. A Memorandum of Understanding was signed between the Department and Kern County Water Agency on March 25, 1987, that provided for the phase out of all agricultural production on the KFE property by the end of 1993. In fact, one of the tenants' leases was terminated in 1989. Then in 1991, at the peak of the drought, all the remaining tenant leases were terminated, and thereafter all agricultural lands owned by the Department were fallowed and introduced annual grasses and forbs colonized the KFE property. The Kern Fan Element was transferred from DWR consists of approximately 19,900 acres of land located in Kern County southwest of Bakersfield. The Kern Fan Element was farmed for many years until the mid-1980s. After the California Department of Water Resources (Department) purchased the land in 1986, the agricultural fields were gradually taken out of production. By 1994, agriculture had ceased on the property and introduced annual

~~grasses and forbs had colonized the land.~~ The area is traversed by I-5, SRs 99, 119, 166, and 223 and paved and unpaved rural roads.

7.15.2.2 Changes in Physical Setting between 1996 – 201403

~~The KWB facilities currently include approximately 7,200 acres of recharge ponds, 85 recovery wells, an extensive network of monitoring wells, 36 miles of pipeline, and the 6-mile-long KWB Canal. Numerous small, unpaved roads have been constructed to provide access along the KWB Canal and to other KWB facilities. Between 1996 and 201403, and as a result of the proposed project, some minor access roads associated with groundwater storage facilities were built in Kern County.~~

7.15.2.3 Regulatory Setting in 1995

Various federal, state and local agencies are responsible for transportation in the areas affected by the KWB activities~~proposed project~~. The most relevant agencies and laws and regulations are described below.

Federal

Federal Highway Administration

The Federal Highway Administration coordinates highway transportation programs in cooperation with states and other partners to enhance the country's safety, economic vitality, quality of life, and the environment. Major program areas include the Federal-Aid Highway Program, which provides federal financial assistance to states for construction and improvement of the National Highway System, urban and rural roads, and bridges. This program provides funds for general improvements and development of safe highways and roads.

State

California Department of Transportation

The California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) and its predecessors are responsible for planning, designing, building, operating and maintaining California's 15,000-mile State Highway System.

California Transportation Commission

The California Transportation Commission (CTC) is responsible for programming and allocating funds for the construction of highway, passenger rail and transit improvements throughout California. The Commission also advises and assists the Secretary of Business, Transportation, and Housing Agency and the Legislature in formulating and evaluating State policies and plans for California's transportation programs. The Commission is also an active participant in the initiation and development of State and federal legislation that seeks to secure financial stability for the State's transportation needs.

State Transportation Improvement Program

The State TIP is a multi-year capital improvement program of transportation projects on and off the State Highway System, funded with revenues from the State Highway Account and other funding sources. The fund estimate serves to identify the amount of new funds available for the programming of transportation projects. Once the fund estimate is adopted, Caltrans and the regional planning agencies prepare TIPs for submittal by December 15th. Caltrans prepares the Interregional

Transportation Improvement Plan and regional agencies prepare Regional Transportation Improvement Plans. Public hearings are held in January (even years) in both northern and southern California. The State TIP is adopted by the CTC by April (even years).

State Highway Operations and Protection Program

The State Highway Operations and Protection Program (SHOPP) is a funding program for Caltrans-initiated projects that meet certain guidelines in accordance with Government Code Section 14526.5, Streets and Highways Code Section 164.6. These projects must be approved by the CTC, a separate governmental body from Caltrans. SHOPP is a four-year program of projects that address traffic safety, roadway rehabilitation, roadside rehabilitation, and operations related to the State Highway System.

Local

Kern Council of Governments

Kern Council of Governments (KCOG) is an association of city and county governments created to address regional transportation issues while protecting the integrity and autonomy of each jurisdiction. Its member agencies include the County of Kern and the eleven incorporated cities within Kern County, including Arvin, Bakersfield, California City, Delano, Maricopa, McFarland, Ridgecrest, Shafter, Taft, Tehachapi, and Wasco.

The Kern County 2000 Regional Transportation Plan is comprised of the Action Element, which establishes a plan for addressing identified needs and issues in accordance with the goals, objectives, and policies of the Regional Transit Plan, Intelligent Transportation Systems, Congestion Management Program, Air Quality Conformity, and a Financial Element. In addition, Kern County utilizes Transportation System Management (TSM) in its transportation planning, a system-wide approach to maximize use of existing facilities and available resources. KCOG, in cooperation with the City of Bakersfield, Kern County, and Caltrans, has developed TSM strategies to reduce traffic congestion.

General Plans

General Plans of the various counties and cities of the State of California contain a mandatory transportation and circulation element that includes policies to facilitate the respective Counties' Congestion Management Plans as well as local and regional transportation planning. All individual projects under the ~~KWB activities proposed project~~ would be expected to comply with the policies of the transportation element of the applicable General Plan.

7.15.2.4 Changes in Regulatory Setting between 1996 – 2014⁰³

Local

Kern County Regional Transportation Plan

The 2014 Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) prepared by KCOG was adopted on June 24, 2014. The 2014 RTP is a 26-year blueprint that establishes a set of regional transportation goals, policies, and actions intended to guide development of the planned multimodal transportation systems in Kern County. The RTP includes a Congestion Management Program designed to ensure that a balanced transportation system is developed, relating population and traffic growth, land use decisions, performance standards, and air quality improvements.¹

Kern County General Plan

The Circulation Element of the General Plan adopted in 2004 contains goals and policies related to traffic and transportation. The goals include protecting road right-of-way, protecting corridors for future transportation facilities, reserving right-of-way to meet future road needs that result from development, and providing ample flexibility in the Highway Plan to allow for growth beyond the 20-year planning horizon.²

The policies provide that the development of roads shall be in accordance with the Circulation Diagram Map, the timing and scope of required facilities should be set up and implemented through the Kern County Land Division Ordinance, mitigation is required if development causes affected roadways to fall below Level Of Service D, and developers shall build roads needed to access the existing road network

Bakersfield General Plan

The Circulation Element of the General Plan adopted in 2002 contains goals to provide a safe and efficient street system that links all parts of the area for movement of people and goods; provide for safe and efficient motorized, non-motorized, and pedestrian traffic movement; and minimize the impact of truck traffic on circulation, and on noise sensitive land uses.

Circulation Element policies include designing and locating driveways to minimize traffic disruption, require truck access to commercial and industrial properties be designed to minimize impacts on adjacent residential parcels, design transportation improvements to minimize noise impacts on adjacent uses, prevent streets and intersections from degrading below Level of Service "C" where possible, and require new development and expansion of existing development to pay or participate in its pro rata share of the costs of expansions.³

7.15.3 IMPACTS AND MITIGATION MEASURES

7.15-3 Traffic and circulation on or near KWB Lands in the Kern Fan Element could potentially be affected by KWB activities. ~~construction and operation of percolation ponds.~~

1996 — 201403

~~In 1995, the Kern Water Bank Authority (KWBA) constructed 3,034 acres of recharge ponds. From 1998 through 2003, an additional 4,080 acres were converted to shallow percolation ponds, for a total of 7,114 acres in 2003 in the Kern Fan Element. KWBA also constructed the Kern Water Bank Canal, a six-mile long earthen canal extending from the Kern River to the California Aqueduct.⁴ The KWBA facilities include approximately 7,200 acres of recharge ponds, 85 recovery wells, an extensive network of monitoring wells, 36 miles of pipeline, and the 6-mile-long KWB Canal. Unpaved roads were constructed to provide access to the new facilities. Traffic volumes on some rural roads temporarily increased during the construction period. In addition, routine maintenance of the new facilities resulted in a permanent increase in vehicular traffic on rural roads. Prior to 1995, the land now occupied by the ponds lay fallow and generated little or no traffic. The small increases in vehicular movements attributable to KWB construction and operation of the proposed project had little adverse effect on traffic flow on the affected rural roads. ~~Consequently, the proposed project is considered to have a less than significant impact.~~~~

Therefore, the impact of KWB activities from 1996 to 2014 with regard to traffic and circulation was **less than significant.**

Mitigation Measures

None required.

Future Impacts 2015 — 2030

~~A Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) was developed for the KWB. The HCP allows developed uses on about 4,000 acres of KWB Lands (see Appendix 7-7a). Developed uses included permanent KWB facilities, farming, and commerce. Approximately 490 acres of land adjacent to Interstate 5 is designated for possible commercial use. Between 1995 and 2014, no development occurred on the 490-acre parcel. Since 2003, the Settlement Agreement prohibits development of this parcel. The Habitat Conservation Plan for the KWB allows developed uses; and approximately 490 acres are designated for possible commercial use. Between 1995 and 2003, no development occurred on the 490-acre parcel. The Settlement Agreement prohibits development of this parcel, and so under the proposed project the parcel would remain undeveloped.~~

~~Under the proposed project, it is expected that the KWBA would construct an additional 1,200 acres of percolation ponds in the Kern Fan Element. Near-term future KWB activities include construction of approximately 190 acres of recharge ponds and three wells under the ongoing Integrated Regional Water Management (IRWM) program (Kern Water Bank Recharge and Recovery Project). Longer-term future construction of approximately 862 acres of additional recharge ponds and associated facilities is anticipated as a result of full build-out. In addition to the new recharge ponds, wells, and associated facilities, other potential ground-disturbing activities could include: fencing, constructing replacement recovery wells, installing and replacing pipeline, and installing weir boxes. Maintenance of existing and new basins, wells, and ancillary facilities would also take place. The IRWM program ponds have been sited. The locations of additional ponds are approximate but will be consistent with KWB HCP/Natural Community Conservation Plan (NCCP) requirements; final locations and areas will be determined as these facilities are designed.~~

The impacts of future conversion of lands for use as recharge ponds~~percolation basins~~ would affect traffic and circulation in the same way as past land conversion for the same purpose, as discussed above. The small increases in vehicular movements attributable to construction and operation of the recharge ponds and other KWB facilities would have a small temporary average daily traffic increase ~~little effect~~ on traffic flow on the affected rural roads. ~~The proposed project would have a **less-than-significant impact**.~~

Therefore, the impact of KWB activities from 2015 to 2030 with regard to traffic and circulation would be **less than significant**.

Mitigation Measures

None required.

ENDNOTES

1. Kern Council of Governments. 2014 (June 19). *2014 Regional Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategy*. Available: http://www.kerncog.org/images/docs/rtp/2014_RTP.pdf. Accessed May 7, 2015. Pages 2-2 through 2-11.
2. Kern County Planning Department. 2009 (September 22). *Kern County General Plan, Circulation Element*. Originally adopted by Kern County Board of Supervisors June 15, 2004; updated through September 22, 2009. Available: <http://www.co.kern.ca.us/planning/pdfs/kcgp/KCGPChp2Circulation.pdf>. Accessed May 6, 2015. Pages 91–95.
3. Kern County. 2007 (December 11). *Metropolitan Bakersfield General Plan (Unincorporated Planning Area)*, Circulation Element. Adopted by Kern County Board of Supervisors December 3, 2002; updated through December 11, 2007. Available: <http://www.bakersfieldcity.us/weblink7/Browse.aspx?startid=602140&dbid=0>. Accessed May 6, 2015. Pages III-10 through III-19.
4. ~~Jonathon Parker, Kern Water Bank Authority, personal communication with John Davis, EIP team, October 2003.~~

This page intentionally left blank.