

3.18 IRREVERSIBLE AND IRRETRIEVABLE COMMITMENTS OF RESOURCES AND SIGNIFICANT IRREVERSIBLE ENVIRONMENTAL CHANGES

The irreversible and irretrievable commitment of resources is the permanent loss of resources for future or alternative purposes. Irreversible and irretrievable resources are those that cannot be recovered or recycled or those that are consumed or reduced to unrecoverable forms. Section 15126.2(c) of the California State CEQA Guidelines states that significant irreversible environmental changes that would be involved with a project may include:

- ▲ consumption of non-renewable resources;
- ▲ changes to land use which would commit future generations to similar uses; and
- ▲ irreversible changes which may result from environmental accidents associated with the project.

3.18.1 Consumption of Non-Renewable Resources

Implementation of any of the build alternatives for the US 50/South Shore Community Revitalization Project would result in the consumption of energy and materials. Fossil fuels would be required for construction of the project, as well as operation and maintenance. Construction associated with the new pedestrian bridge, the realignment of US 50, and related improvements associated with Alternatives B, C, and D, and the pedestrian plaza with Alternative E, would require the manufacture of new materials (e.g., asphalt, concrete, rebar, paint). The raw materials and energy required for the manufacture of these materials would result in an irretrievable commitment of natural resources.

Alternatives B, C, and D also include the potential future redevelopment of three sites within the project site to include a mix of residential and commercial uses. These sites are the preferred location for replacement housing for dislocated residents. Energy would be expended in the form of gasoline, diesel fuel, and oil for vehicles and equipment in support of construction and operation. Construction activities and demolition of existing facilities would generate non-recyclable materials, such as solid waste and construction debris. Electricity and natural gas would be expended for the construction and operation of the future mixed-use development sites, a portion of which would be offset by the displacement and removal of similar uses to accommodate the highway realignment. This would include irreversible changes associated with excavation, grading, and construction activities and would affect air quality, coverage, and water quality. These changes that are associated with the improvements related to each of the build alternatives are addressed throughout this document and the changes associated with the mixed-use development sites is addressed programmatically in this document.

The mixed-use development sites would be subject to subsequent project-level environmental review, which may yield additional site-specific mitigation measures. Regardless, the potential for disturbance associated with the build alternatives would represent an irreversible change. In addition, construction activities would entail the use of concrete, glass, plastic, and petroleum products, as well as an increase in energy consumption, which would be irreversible and irretrievable upon expenditure.

3.18.2 Changes to Land Use Which Would Commit Future Generations to Similar Uses

The US 50/South Shore Community Revitalization Project consists of realignment of US 50, related improvements, construction of a new pedestrian bridge between the tourist core and Van Sickle Bi-state Park, pedestrian and bicycle facilities, and three mixed-use development sites with Alternatives B, C, and D. Implementation of these alternatives would require the removal of woody vegetation within the project site

(see Section 3.16, “Biological Environment”). This loss of woody vegetation would be permanent as a result of paving and other necessary construction components”); however, the effects would be minimized with preparation and implementation of a Tree Removal, Protection, and Replanting Plan as required by Mitigation Measure 3.16-3.

Uses of nonrenewable resources during construction of any of the build alternatives may be irreversible because a large commitment of such resources makes removal or reuse thereafter unlikely. Implementation of the project would result in permanent changes to the existing environment, which have been described throughout this EIR/EIS/EIS. Construction activities associated with the project would result in the irreversible consumption of nonrenewable resources. The irreversible commitment of limited resources is inherent in any construction project. Resources anticipated to be irreversibly committed would include: sand, gravel, concrete, petrochemicals, construction materials, and water. The project would also require the consumption of fossil fuels to meet energy demands associated with construction vehicles and equipment.

3.18.3 Irreversible Changes Which Would Result from Environmental Accidents

The project does not provide for an appreciable increase in use of hazardous materials relative to existing conditions and would transport, use, and generate only small volumes of hazardous materials associated with construction. The construction contractor would prepare a construction hazardous materials management plan as identified in Mitigation Measure 3.12-2b. The construction contractor would also prepare a storm water pollution prevention plan (SWPPP) that must address proper use and storage of hazardous materials, spill prevention and containment, and cleanup and reporting of any hazardous materials releases. The SWPPP also includes proposed best management practices (BMPs) and a site-specific Construction Site Monitoring and Reporting Plan developed by a Qualified SWPPP Developer. With continued compliance with existing federal, state, and local laws and regulations related to hazardous materials (see Section 3.12, “Hazards, Hazardous Materials, and Risk of Upset”), the US 50/South Shore Community Revitalization Project would not be expected to result in environmental accidents that have the potential to cause irreversible damage to the natural or human environment.