

CITY OF CARSON

RESOLUTION NO. 22-233

A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF CARSON, CALIFORNIA, ADOPTING “VEHICLE MILES TRAVELED” SCREENING CRITERIA AND THRESHOLDS OF SIGNIFICANCE FOR PURPOSES OF ANALYZING TRANSPORTATION IMPACTS UNDER THE CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY ACT (CEQA) AND FIND THAT THE ACTION IS EXEMPT FROM CEQA

WHEREAS, the California Environmental Quality Act Guidelines (“CEQA Guidelines”) encourage public agencies to develop and publish generally applicable “thresholds of significance” to be used in determining the significance of a project’s environmental effects; and

WHEREAS, CEQA Guidelines section 15064.7(a) defines a threshold of significance as “an identifiable quantitative, qualitative or performance level of a particular environmental effect, noncompliance with which means the effect will normally be determined to be significant by the agency and compliance with which means the effect normally will be determined to be less than significant”; and

WHEREAS, CEQA Guidelines section 15064.7(b) provides that thresholds of significance to be adopted for general use as part of the lead agency's environmental review process must be adopted by ordinance, resolution, rule, or regulations, developed through a public review process, and be supported by substantial evidence; and

WHEREAS, pursuant to CEQA Guidelines section 15064.7(c), when adopting thresholds of significance, a lead agency may consider thresholds of significance adopted or recommended by other public agencies provided that the decision of the lead agency to adopt such thresholds is supported by substantial evidence; and

WHEREAS, Senate Bill 743, enacted in 2013 and codified in Public Resources Code section 21099, required changes to the CEQA Guidelines regarding the criteria for determining the significance of transportation impacts of projects; and

WHEREAS, in 2018, the Governor’s Office of Planning and Research (“OPR”) proposed, and the California Natural Resources Agency certified and adopted, new CEQA Guidelines section 15064.3 that identifies vehicle miles traveled (“VMT”) – meaning the amount and distance of automobile travel attributable to a project – as the most appropriate metric to evaluate a project’s transportation impacts under CEQA. CEQA Guidelines section 15064.3 went into effect on July 1, 2020; and

WHEREAS, as a result, automobile delay, as measured by “level of service” and other similar metrics, generally no longer constitutes a significant environmental effect under CEQA; and

WHEREAS, on October 11, 2022, the Planning Commission conducted a duly noticed public hearing to consider the proposed VMT thresholds of significance.

WHEREAS, on November 15, 2022, the City Council conducted a public hearing to consider the proposed City of Carson VMT Baselines, Screening Criteria, and Thresholds of Significance attached hereto as Exhibit “A.”

WHEREAS, having done so, the City Council finds that proposed VMT thresholds of significance, are supported by substantial evidence. The proposed thresholds are consistent with OPR guidance. The process utilized the SCAG model, reflecting City baseline land use and transportation network to develop the VMT thresholds. This was largely completed through technical analysis using the model and spreadsheets and translated into transportation study guidelines; and

WHEREAS, the City’s project review process will retain “level of service” analysis to ensure consistency with the General Plan.

NOW, THEREFORE, THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF CARSON, CALIFORNIA, DOES HEREBY FIND, DETERMINE AND RESOLVE AS FOLLOWS:

Section 1. The foregoing recitals are true and correct, and are incorporated herein as findings of fact.

Section 2. The adoption of new local CEQA VMT Screening Criteria and thresholds of significance for transportation impacts will not have a significant environmental impact and is exempt from the CEQA pursuant to Section 15308 of Title 14 of the California Code of Regulations because the action is undertaken by the City for the protection of the environment. The revised CEQA thresholds will be compliant with State law (SB 743) and will be used in a regulatory process (CEQA process) that involves procedures for the protection of the environment. Accordingly, the action is exempt from the environmental review requirements of CEQA pursuant to Section 15308 of Title 14 of the California Code of Regulations.

Section 3. The City Council of the City of Carson hereby adopts the City of Carson VMT Baselines, Screening Criteria, and Thresholds of Significance attached hereto as Exhibit “A.”

Section 4. The City Clerk shall certify to the adoption of this Resolution and enter it into the book of original Resolutions.

PASSED, APPROVED AND ADOPTED this 15th day of November 2022.

Lula Davis-Holmes, Mayor

ATTEST:

Dr. Khaleah R. Bradshaw, City Clerk

APPROVED AS TO FORM:

Sunny K. Soltani, City Attorney

EXHIBIT “A”

City of Carson City of Carson VMT Baselines, Screening Criteria, and Thresholds of Significance

Consistent with State CEQA guidelines section 15064.3, the City of Carson has adopted the vehicle miles traveled (VMT) screening criteria set forth in Table 1. The City of Carson has also adopted project baselines and thresholds of significance set forth in Table 2 below to guide in determining when a project will have a significant transportation impact.

TABLE 1 – VMT SCREENING GUIDANCE	
Screening Categories	Project Requirements to Meet Screening Criteria
Project Size	A project that generates 110 or fewer daily trips.
Locally Serving Retail	A project that has locally serving retail uses that are 50,000 square feet or less, including specialty retail, shopping center, grocery store, pharmacy, financial services/banks, fitness center or health club, restaurant, and café. If the project contains other land uses, those uses need to be considered under other applicable screening criteria. Proposed projects less than 50,000 square feet that are unique uses or regional draws, may require additional information or evidence that they will be local-serving.
Project Located in a Low VMT Area	A residential or office project that is located in a SCAG traffic analysis zone (TAZ) that is already 15% below the City + SOI Baseline VMT.
Transit Proximity	A multifamily residential project providing higher density housing or a commercial project in an area already zoned for commercial use that is located within a ½ mile of the Metro Silver Line or within a ½ mile of a bus stop with service frequency of 15 minutes or less during commute periods. In addition, the project should have the following characteristics: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A floor Area Ratio (FAR) of 0.75 or greater - Is consistent with the applicable SCAG SCS (as determined by the City) - Does not provide more parking than required by the City - Does not replace affordable housing units
Affordable Housing	A residential project that provides affordable housing units; if part of a larger development, only those units that meet the definition of affordable housing satisfy the screening criteria.
Transportation Facilities	Transportation projects that promote non-auto travel, improve safety, or improve traffic operations at current bottlenecks, such as transit, bicycle and pedestrian facilities, intersection traffic control (e.g., traffic signals or roundabouts), or widening at intersections to provide new turn lanes.

TABLE 2 –PROJECT BASELINES AND THRESHOLDS OF SIGNIFICANCE

Project Type	Thresholds
Land Use Plan	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1) Project Impact: A significant impact would occur if the VMT rate for the plan would exceed 15 percent below the applicable baseline VMT rate.2) Cumulative Project Effect: A significant impact would occur if the project increases total regional VMT compared to cumulative no project conditions.
Land Use Project	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1) Project Impact: A significant impact would occur if the VMT rate for the project would exceed 15 percent below the applicable baseline VMT rate.2) Cumulative Project Effect: A significant impact would occur if the project increases total regional VMT compared to cumulative no project conditions.
Retail Project (over 50,000 square feet)	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1) Project Impact: A significant impact would occur if the VMT rate for the project would exceed 15 percent below the applicable baseline VMT.2) Cumulative Project Effect: A significant impact would occur if the project increases total VMT in the study area compared to baseline conditions.
Transportation Project	A significant impact would occur if the project causes a net increase in total regional VMT compared to baseline conditions, opening year no project conditions, or cumulative no project conditions.
All land use and transportation projects	A significant impact would occur if the project is inconsistent with the RTP/SCS.

Notes:

- 1) Baseline VMT rate is defined as the City of Carson per applicable service population.
- 2) Baseline may be changed pending updates to the SCAG RTP model