

Subject	Definition of Project Alternatives for the 2008 CTP EIR
Summary of Issues	The Authority has begun preparing a program EIR on the 2008 <i>Countywide Comprehensive Transportation Plan</i> . Authority staff and consultants are working to identify alternatives, in addition to the “project”, that the EIR would analyze. The Authority defined three very distinct alternative Measure J expenditure plans that were used in the EIR on the 2004 CTP. Now that Measure J has passed and many of the funding decisions have been made, making identification of alternatives more complicated. Staff and TCC, however, have identified several alternatives for the 2008 CTP EIR.
Recommendations	Staff recommends that, in addition to the required No Project alternative, that the EIR on the 2008 CTP analyze three other alternatives: Freeway Performance Initiative, Frequent Service Transit Network, and Climate Change
Financial Implications	The approved budget is sufficient to cover anticipated costs.
Options	Identify additional or different alternatives
Attachments	None
Changes from Committee	<i>Approved</i>

Background

As it has for its previous plans, the Authority has decided to prepare an EIR on the adoption of the 2008 *Countywide Comprehensive Transportation Plan*. Under CEQA, every environmental impact report must consider alternatives to the project. The basic requirement for alternatives is contained in Section 15126.6 of the CEQA Guidelines:

An EIR shall describe a range of reasonable alternatives to the project, or to the location of the project, which would feasibly attain most of the basic objectives of the project but would avoid or substantially lessen any of the significant effects of the project, and evaluate the comparative merits of the alternatives.

This section defines the criteria for selecting alternatives: the alternatives should both feasibly attain the CTP’s objectives and lessen any significantly adverse impacts the EIR has identified.

The alternatives for the 2004 CTP were relatively easy to define. The Authority had outlined three very distinct investment programs as part of the development of the Measure J expenditure plan which provided clear alternatives that the EIR could evaluate. The 2008 CTP, on the other hand, will not include an alternative investment program and will instead assume that the projects and programs in the Measure J Expenditure Plan will not change. In fact, where specifically named — the Caldecott Tunnel, for example, or eBART — they would be included in the No Project alternative as well.

The EIR on the 2004 CTP identified only one significant unavoidable impact: an increase in the levels of several air pollutants. It also, however, identified several significant but mitigable impacts. One of the purposes of the alternatives for this EIR, then, would be to lessen the potential significant impacts.

The Authority and our EIR consultants have identified some potential alternatives that could meet the CEQA requirements for alternatives.

NO PROJECT ALTERNATIVE

The No Project alternative, required by CEQA, addresses the effects of not implementing the CTP 2008 Update. According to the CEQA Guidelines,

The purpose of describing and analyzing a no project alternative is to allow decision makers to compare the impacts of approving the proposed project with the impacts of not approving the proposed project.

The No Project alternative must describe both *existing* conditions and the conditions that are “*reasonably expected to occur in the foreseeable future if the project were not approved.*” For a revision of an existing plan or policy, the No Project alternative would assume that the existing plan, policy or operation would continue unchanged.

For this EIR, staff recommends that the No Project alternative include only those projects that have committed funding. Specifically, this alternative would include projects that are: 1) included in the adopted 2008 State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP); 2) not yet in the STIP but are specifically named projects various in the Measure J Expenditure Plan; 3) included in the most recent Measure C and Measure J Expenditure Plans; and 4) within Contra Costa or the Tri-Valley that have specifically committed funding. For example, the “specifically named” projects would include the Caldecott Tunnel Fourth Bore, State Route 4 East widening, eBART to Antioch, Capitol Corridor improvements at Martinez and Hercules, and the school bus program in San Ramon Valley. The Measure J Strategic Plan includes several phases of the State Route 4 Bypass, safety improvements on Vasco Road, and improvements to several interchanges (I-680/SR 4, I-80/Central, I-80/San Pablo Dam Road, SR 242/Clayton Road).

ALTERNATIVE ONE: FREEWAY PERFORMANCE INITIATIVE

As part of its work on the T-2035 Plan, MTC analyzed the impacts of a variety of ITS and operational improvements. These improvements included ramp metering, changeable message signs and variable speed limits. According to MTC and Caltrans, these improvements could result in an increase in freeway capacity of approximately eight percent. In MTC’s analysis, this alternative scored very well against the other scenarios.

Staff is recommending that the EIR analyze a similar alternative using the same method of analysis. The Project Alternative already includes ITS on the I-80 corridor through the Integrated Corridor Management (ICM) project on that route. This alternative would assume implementation of an ICM project on *all* freeways in Contra Costa. The FPI alternative would be modeled by assuming an 8 percent increase in freeway capacity. The theoretical increase in freeway capacity would only have a beneficial impact on freeway segments that are at or above capacity during the peak hour. The alternative would include a more detailed list of potential improvements building upon the MTC alternative.

ALTERNATIVE TWO: FREQUENT SERVICE TRANSIT NETWORK

This alternative, which was suggested by transit agency staff on the Authority’s Technical Coordinating Committee, would assume increased frequencies on existing routes (possibly including BART) and add a few new bus rapid transit or limited stop routes. These new routes would incorporate some of the recommendations of the Frequent Service Transit Network that transit agency staff throughout the region developed in consultation with MTC, especially where they would take advantage of HOV lanes.

ALTERNATIVE THREE: CLIMATE CHANGE ALTERNATIVE

This alternative would incorporate measures to limit conditions that add to climate change. In June of this year, OPR released a “technical advisory” on CEQA and climate change. The advisory notes that:

Lead agencies should determine whether greenhouse gases may be generated by a proposed project, and if so, quantify or estimate the GHG emissions by type and source [and] must assess whether those emissions are individually or cumulatively significant If the lead agency determines that the GHG emissions from the project as proposed are potentially significant, it must investigate and implement ways to avoid, reduce, or otherwise mitigate the impacts of those emissions.

The focus of a “climate change alternative” would be on assessing the environmental impacts of incorporating measures intended to minimize factors leading to climate change. The California Attorney General’s office has identified a long list of such measures. Most of these measures, however, are not relevant to a countywide transportation plan. One measure that is applicable — to “increase the cost of driving and parking private vehicles by, e.g., imposing tolls and parking fees” — could form the basis for an alternative. It could be reflected in the Countywide Model assuming higher tolls and parking costs. We would also assume an increase in tele-work — another AG-suggested measure — in the model as a response to forecast congestion, higher driving costs and improved communications technology. This would be reflected in a 7 percent work trip telecommute for upper income workers in the model. This approach follows the suggestions outlined in the recent update to the CTC’s regional transportation guidelines, which were amended to address AB32.

In addition to the above description of increasing fees for driving and parking, additional measures could be included based on the Attorney General’s comments on RTPs and Draft EIRs on RTPs as well as on General Plan policies related to greenhouse gases (GHGs) and climate change. These measures could include the following types of actions or commitments which CCTA would make (recognizing that many of these would be qualitative and would not appear in the model):

- Support the preparation of Climate Action Plans (the draft West County Action Plan already includes this commitment).
- Offer voluntary incentives (or funding priorities) for projects or programs that include a GHG emissions reduction component. This might include incentives for replacement buses that are hybrid electric or maybe even buses with hydrogen fuel cells.
- Adopt “green construction” policies and practices for Measure J funded work, modeled on the State’s requirements. These might include requirements for use of the lowest emitting construc-

tion equipment and fuels (e.g. diesel-powered vehicles with EPA Tier 3 or better engines or retrofitting to meet equivalent emission standards as Tier 3 engines).

- Promote or require use of light colored pavement for solar reflectivity and reduced heat island effects.
- Require shade tree planting as part of specified types of construction projects or wherever Measure J-funded construction results in loss of tree cover (trees have carbon sequestration capacity).
- Establish minimum standards for construction management, including specifying minimum content for recycled products in aggregate, concrete, etc. and construction waste management.

We would also note that many of the measures in the AG’s list are already part of the Measure J Expenditure Plan, including funding intermodal stations, supporting school bus programs, funding bicycle and pedestrian facilities, and providing TDM support, which we do through the 511 Contra Costa program.