

## 6 CEQA REQUIRED ASSESSMENT CONCLUSIONS

As required by CEQA, this chapter provides an overview of the impacts of the proposed General Plan 2030 and the Airport Land Use Compatibility Plan (ALUCP) override based on the technical analyses presented in this EIR. The topics covered in this chapter include growth inducement, unavoidable significant impacts, expected significant irreversible environmental changes, and cumulative impacts. A more detailed analysis of the project-level and cumulative effects of the proposed project on the environment is provided in Chapter 4 of this report.

### *A. Growth Inducement*

A project is typically considered to be growth-inducing if it fosters economic or population growth. Typical growth inducements might be the extension of urban services or transportation infrastructure to a previously unserved or under-served area, or removal of major barriers to development. Not all growth inducement is necessarily negative. Negative impacts associated with growth inducement occur only where the projected growth would cause adverse environmental impacts.

Growth-inducing impacts fall into two general categories: direct and indirect. Direct growth-inducing impacts generally result from the extension of urban services to an undeveloped area, which can serve to induce landowners in the vicinity to convert their properties to urban uses. Indirect, or secondary, growth-inducing impacts, refer to growth induced by additional demands for housing, goods, and services associated with the population increase caused by, or attracted to, a new project.

#### **1. Direct Impacts**

The proposed General Plan 2030 and ALUCP override would directly induce population, employment, and economic growth by allowing development in areas not currently designated for urban growth. Implementation of the proposed project would result in the following growth under projected buildout conditions in 2030 based on the expected growth assumptions for the unincorporated county:

- ◆ Add approximately 33,800 new residents.
- ◆ Add approximately 13,700 new residential units.
- ◆ Add approximately 1.8 million new square feet of retail and office uses.
- ◆ Add approximately 1.1 million new square feet of industrial uses.

The primary mechanism for this growth is the General Plan 2030 land use map, which allows for development in areas that are not currently developed. The anticipated locations of this growth are shown in Figure 3-5 in Chapter 3, Project Description.

The General Plan 2030 land use map allows some residential development in rural areas of the county. Under General Plan 2030, the County would continue its practice of allowing a single family home to be constructed on parcels designated for agricultural and timber mountain uses.

However, the proposed General Plan 2030 includes policies to control how growth occurs within Butte County and to encourage infill development. Land Use Element Goal LU-2 and its associated policies call for orderly, well-planned, and balanced growth. Policies LU-P2.3 and LU-P2.4 support planning efforts in unincorporated communities through the development of community visions, area plans, urban growth boundaries, community boundaries and spheres of influence (SOIs). In addition, Policy LU-P15.2 requires that new urban development be primarily located in or immediately adjoining already urbanized areas. Goal LU-8 promotes development near existing infrastructure and services and within already-developed areas. Policy LU-P8.1 directs industry to be located near major transportation facilities. Policy LU-P8.2 requires that the County direct projected growth to areas where the appropriate level of transportation infrastructure is or will be available during the planning period. In addition, Policies LU-P8.3, LU-P8.4, LU-P8.5, and LU-P15.3 promote efficient infill development near public facilities.

The proposed General Plan 2030 also includes policies that would maintain the rural character of Butte County and minimize the environmental impacts of anticipated growth. Policy LU-P4.1 requires that the integrity and stability

of existing residential neighborhoods be promoted and preserved. In addition, the Land Use Element supports community planning efforts that would preserve the character of these communities through policies LU-P2.4, which supports planning efforts in unincorporated communities by providing knowledge, time, and materials to community efforts, and LU-P2.5, which engages unincorporated communities in community planning processes to set a community vision, develop Area Plans and potentially urban growth boundaries, community boundaries and SOIs.

As a result, while the proposed General Plan 2030 and ALUCP override would result in increased local growth, policies included in General Plan 2030 would reduce the potential for negative impacts associated with direct growth inducement to a *less-than-significant* level.

## **2. Indirect Impacts**

As described above, indirect growth-inducing impacts would be growth induced in the region by additional demands for housing, goods, and services associated with the population increase caused by a new project.

While the proposed General Plan 2030 and ALUCP override allow additional growth, General Plan 2030 also includes specific policies that direct growth to existing urbanized areas. For example, Policy LU-P2.3 requires that new urban development be primarily located in or immediately adjoining already urbanized areas. The proposed General Plan 2030 land use map also works to limit the expansion of urban growth by providing designations that allow urban development primarily within the SOIs for the incorporated municipalities and the existing unincorporated communities. Outside of those areas, the General Plan land use designations would not allow urban levels of development. The principles that guided the development of the land use map for General Plan 2030 are also included as policies in the Land Use Element. In particular, Policy LU-P15.1 requires that the County prevent scattered development patterns and encourage development in existing urbanized areas, and in particular areas that have access to public services and infrastructure.

In addition, the General Plan 2030 land use map provides a mixture of housing, retail, and employment opportunities within Butte County so that as the number of residents increase, they do not pressure adjacent communities to provide new commercial and employment opportunities. As a result, the proposed General Plan 2030 and ALUCP override would result in a *less-than-significant* indirect negative growth inducing impact.

### ***B. Unavoidable Significant Impacts***

While the majority of impacts associated with General Plan 2030 and the ALCUP override would be reduced to a *less-than-significant* level, adoption and implementation of the proposed project would result in the following *significant and unavoidable* impacts:

#### **1. Agriculture**

Growth and development under General Plan 2030 will result in the conversion of Prime Farmland, Farmland of Statewide Importance and Unique Farmland to non-agricultural uses, as well as conflicts with existing Williamson Act contracts. These impacts cannot be mitigated to a less-than-significant level. In addition, as growth occurs elsewhere in Butte County and surrounding counties, additional agricultural lands will be converted to non-agricultural uses resulting in significant cumulative impacts. As a result, the potential for project-level and cumulative impacts associated with agricultural land would be *significant and unavoidable*.

#### **2. Biological Resources**

Although growth and development under General Plan 2030 would not result in environmental impacts to biological resources, development in Butte County and elsewhere in the region would contribute to the on-going loss of undeveloped natural lands, which could impact special-status species, sensitive natural communities, federally-protected wetlands, and wildlife and fish movement corridors. This cumulative impact would be *significant and unavoidable*.

### 3. Hydrology and Water Quality

Although General Plan 2030 polices and actions reduce risks associated with levee and dam failure, they do not fully eliminate the risks to people and property, and there is no feasible mitigation to reduce these impacts to a less-than-significant level. These impacts would contribute to a wider regional trend in which development is occurring within or close to hazard areas. As a result, implementation of General Plan 2030 would have *significant and unavoidable* hydrology and water quality impacts at both the project and cumulative level.

### 4. Land Use

General Plan 2030 conflicts with the ALUCP, which necessitates the ALUCP override. In addition, the City of Chico General Plan conflicts with the ALUCP, so the proposed project would contribute to a cumulative impact. No feasible mitigation is available. Therefore, the project and cumulative impacts are *significant and unavoidable*.

### 5. Noise

Implementation of General Plan 2030 would cause a substantial permanent increase in ambient noise levels from increased traffic and aircraft operations. Anticipated development in the larger region will contribute increased traffic on major regional roadways, so the project would also contribute to cumulative noise conditions that cause a substantial permanent increase in ambient noise levels. No feasible mitigation is available. As a result, the proposed project would have *significant and unavoidable* noise impacts at both the project and cumulative level.

### 6. Transportation and Circulation

As discussed in Chapter 4.13, Transportation and Circulation, a number of improvements to the county's roadway network would be required to accommodate growth under General Plan 2030, and to ensure acceptable traffic operations consistent with Policies CIR-P6.1 and CIR-P6.2. Although mitigation measures are identified that could reduce impacts to a less-than-significant level, many of the facilities targeted for improvements by the mitigation

measures are State or municipal facilities, so implementation cannot be guaranteed. Furthermore, traffic generated under the projected 2030 buildout of General Plan 2030 would contribute to inter-regional traffic volumes on Highways 70, 99, and 65, which already experience deficiencies. No program has been established to address these deficiencies. As a result, the proposed project would have *significant and unavoidable* impacts related to traffic and transportation at both the project and cumulative levels.

## 7. Greenhouse Gas Emissions

Implementation of General Plan 2030 would result in GHG emissions that would contribute to cumulative GHG emissions and global climate change. The 2020 GHG forecast for the county indicates that emissions would be greater than 85 percent of current (2006) conditions, creating a significant contribution to GHG emissions and associated climate change impacts. Policies and actions would provide a comprehensive framework for reducing GHG emissions in the county, but they do not ensure that the County can meet the reduction goal. As part of the General Plan 2030 process, the County considered a wide range of policies and actions to reduce GHG emissions, and all feasible measures are included. However, they do not ensure that the County will meet its reduction goal, so the impact is considered *cumulatively significant and unavoidable*.

### C. Significant Irreversible Changes

Section 15126.2(c) of the CEQA Guidelines requires a discussion of the extent to which a proposed project will commit nonrenewable resources to uses that future generations will probably be unable to reverse. An example of such an irreversible commitment is the construction of highway improvements that would provide public access to previously inaccessible areas.

A project would generally result in a significant irreversible impact if:

- ◆ Primary and secondary impacts would commit future generations to similar uses.

- ◆ The project would involve a large commitment of nonrenewable resources.
- ◆ The project would involve uses in which irreversible damage could result from any potential environmental accidents associated with the project.

### **1. Changes in Land Use that Commit Future Generations**

Development allowed by General Plan 2030 and the ALUCP override would result in the conversion of vacant land to residential, commercial and industrial uses, and the intensification of underutilized areas. This development would constitute a long-term commitment to residential, commercial, industrial, parking, and other urban uses.

### **2. Commitment of Resources**

Development allowed by General Plan 2030 and the ALUCP override would irretrievably commit nonrenewable resources, both from within and outside Butte County, to the construction and maintenance of buildings, infrastructure and roadways. These non-renewable resources include mined materials such as sand, gravel, steel, lead, copper, and other metals. Buildout of General Plan 2030 and the ALUCP override also represents a long-term commitment to the consumption of fossil fuels, natural gas, and gasoline. Increased energy demands would be used for construction, lighting, heating, and cooling of residences, and transportation of people within, to, and from the planning area. General Plan 2030 Goals COS-3 and COS-4 and their associated policies and actions would promote energy conservation, which could minimize or incrementally reduce the consumption of these resources.

Implementation of General Plan 2030 and the ALUCP override would also result in an irreversible commitment of limited, renewable resources such as lumber and water. General Plan 2030 Goals COS-3 and COS-4 and their associated policies and actions would also result in some savings of renewable resources.

### 3. Irreversible Damage from Environmental Accidents

Irreversible changes to the physical environment could occur from accidental release of hazardous materials associated with development activities. However, compliance with State and federal hazardous materials regulations and the countywide response plan, as discussed in Section 4.7, Hazards and Safety, would reduce this potential impact to a *less-than-significant* level. No other irreversible changes are expected to result from the adoption and implementation of General Plan 2030 and the ALUCP override.

#### *D. Cumulative Impacts*

CEQA Guidelines require consideration of the potential cumulative impacts that could result from a proposed project in conjunction with other projects in the vicinity. Such impacts can occur when two or more individual effects create a considerable environmental impact or compound other environmental consequences. In the case of a countywide planning document such as the proposed General Plan 2030, cumulative effects are effects that combine impacts from implementation of the project in the unincorporated county with effects of development in other portions of the region, including the incorporated municipalities and the surrounding counties.

In addition to development within unincorporated Butte County as evaluated in this Draft EIR, the cumulative analyses evaluate aggregated impacts from projected development in the incorporated municipalities of Butte County and adjacent counties. The cumulative analyses consider anticipated levels of growth and development within the following jurisdictions:

- ◆ Municipalities in Butte County:
  - City of Biggs
  - City of Chico
  - City of Gridley
  - City of Oroville
  - Town of Paradise

◆ Adjacent Counties:

- Colusa County
- Glenn County
- Plumas County
- Sutter County
- Tehama County
- Yuba County

◆ Adjacent Municipalities:

- City of Colusa
- City of Corning
- City of Live Oak
- City of Marysville
- City of Orland
- City of Portola
- City of Red Bluff
- City of Tehama
- City of Wheatland
- City of Williams
- City of Willows
- City of Yuba City

While each jurisdiction projects a continued trend of population growth and urbanization into the foreseeable future, most of the jurisdictions expect growth to be moderate and do not expect a substantial increase in their overall level of development in relation to existing conditions. An exception to this trend is southern Yuba County, where a comparatively higher level of growth is occurring and expected to continue in the future.

The potential cumulative effects of the proposed project are discussed at the regional level within each section of Chapter 4, Environmental Evaluation.

**BUTTE COUNTY GENERAL PLAN 2030**  
**DRAFT EIR**  
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