

## **3.12 Transportation and Traffic**

This section of the Final Environmental Impact Report analyzes the existing transportation system in the area and addresses the potential transportation and circulation impacts resulting from development of the Eagle Mountain Pumped Storage Project (Project).

### **3.12.1 Regulatory Setting**

The following federal, state, and local laws and policies apply to transportation. The proposed Project will be constructed and operated in conformance with all applicable federal, state, and local laws, ordinances, regulations, and standards.

Portions of the Project site are located on private lands which are not subject to federal or state land management requirements. Other portions of the Project site are located on federal land which is managed by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM).

**Title 49 Code of Federal Regulations Subtitle B, Parts 171-173, 177-178, 350-359, 397.9 and Appendices A-G** addresses safety considerations for the transport of goods, materials, and substances and governs the transportation of hazardous materials including types of materials and marking of the transportation vehicles.

**California Vehicle Code (VC) Sections 353; 2500-2505; 31303-31309; 32000-32053; 32100-32109; 31600-31620; California Health and Safety Code Section 25160 et seq.** regulates the highway transport of hazardous materials.

**VC Sections 13369; 15275 and 15278** addresses the licensing of drivers and the classification of licenses required for the operation of particular types of vehicles; also requires certificates permitting operation of vehicles transporting hazardous materials.

**VC Sections 35100 et seq.; 35250 et seq.; 35400 et seq.** specifies limits for vehicle width, height, and length.

**VC Section 35780** requires permits for any load exceeding Caltrans weight, length, or width standards on public roadways.

**California Streets and Highways Code Section 117, 660-672** requires permits for any load exceeding Caltrans weight, length, or width standards on county roads.

**California Streets and Highways Code Sections 117, 660-670, 1450, 1460 et seq., and 1480 et seq.** regulates permits from Caltrans for any roadway encroachment from facilities that require construction, maintenance, or repairs on or across state highways and county roads.

**Riverside County General Plan Circulation Element** specifies long-term planning goals and procedures for transportation infrastructure system quality and specifies level of service standards used to assess the performance of a street or highway system and the capacity of a roadway.

**Riverside County Municipal Code Title 10, Chapter 10.08, Sections 10.08.010-10.08.180 and 12.08.010-12.08.100** specifies limits and permit requirements for oversize loads and specifies requirements for encroachment permits.

### **3.12.2 Existing Conditions**

The Riverside County and Project area are served by a variety of transportation systems. These include interstate and state highways, air service, rail service, and motor carriers.

#### **3.12.2.1 Interstate and State Highways**

Three interstate highways pass through Riverside County. Interstate 15 and Interstate 215 are the major north-south freeways. Interstate 10 (I-10) and state highways 60 and 91 provide direct access to the metropolitan areas of Los Angeles and Orange counties as well as joining the Interstate routes at the Arizona border.

The Project site is accessible via I-10 by Kaiser Road (County Road R-2) from State Route 177 at Desert Center, and Eagle Mountain Road both approximately 11 miles south of the Project site.

Eagle Mountain Road currently has very low traffic volume as it primarily only serves the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California's (MWD) Eagle Mountain Pumping Plant. The pavement is 32 feet edge to edge and 40 foot-wide within the I-10 underpass. Eagle Mountain Road is gated at the pumping plant. Kaiser proposes to improve the road and construct a new paved road extension to the townsite as part of the proposed landfill project. Ragsdale Road intersects Eagle Mountain Road from the east, just north of the I-10 ramps in a "T" intersection. The Eagle Mountain Landfill Environmental Impact Report (Landfill EIS/EIR) traffic study showed a daily traffic volume of 82 vehicles with only 32 continuing north of Ragsdale Road (Landfill EIS/EIR, 1996).

State Route 177 (Desert Center Rice Road) has a full interchange with I-10 in Desert Center and is 40 feet wide under the overpass. State Route 177 carried 2,514 vehicles per day between I-10 and Kaiser Road (Landfill EIS/EIR, 1996)

Kaiser Road runs from State Route 177 just north of Desert Center to the Eagle Mountain Mine site. Kaiser Road primarily serves the residents of Lake Tamarisk, the school site at Eagle Mountain, and the mine site. Between State Route 177 and Lake Tamarisk Drive, Kaiser Road carried 424 vehicles per day and north of Lake Tamarisk Drive carried 286 vehicles per day (Landfill EIS/EIR, 1996).

#### **3.12.2.2 Air Service**

There are numerous commercial and general aviation airports within Riverside County. Within the Project region, the closest commercial airport to the Project site is at Palm Springs International Airport located more than 60 miles west of the site.

Two small airports exist in the vicinity. A single private landing strip is located to the south of the townsite of Eagle Mountain and west of Kaiser Road. This airstrip is infrequently used and does not appear on the Airport/Facility Directory. Desert Center Airport is a larger development located approximately 10 miles southeast of the Central Project Area, accessed from State Route 177. The Desert Center Airport is a privately owned property located southeast of State Route 177 (Desert Center-Rice Road) and north of I-10 in the community of Desert Center, in unincorporated Riverside County. The Desert Center Airport is not a public use airport, and activity levels are very low. In recent years, the Desert Center Airport has been converted into a privately owned race track.

### 3.12.2.3 Rail and Motor Freight Service

Business and industry within Riverside County are served by major rail carriers including Atchison, Topeka, and Santa Fe; Southern Pacific; and Union Pacific (Riverside County Economic Development Agency, 2009).

The Eagle Mountain Rail Line is located within the Project site. The proposed Project does not intend to utilize the Rail Line however the Kaiser proposes to rehabilitate the Eagle Mountain Rail Line to transport solid waste to the Eagle Mountain Landfill from southern California.

A variety of motor carriers serve the communities within Riverside County and the Project region.

### 3.12.2.4 Local Roadways

Existing average daily traffic from the Landfill EIR showed 424 vehicles per day on Kaiser Road from State Route 177 to Lake Tamarisk Drive and 286 vehicles per day north of Lake Tamarisk Drive in 1995. The traffic study showed both Eagle Mountain Road and Kaiser Road showing level of services rated as "A." An "A" level of service provides a road that nearly all drivers find freedom of operation, there are very seldom times of more than one vehicle in a queue and average delay per vehicle ranges between 0 and 10 seconds. Eagle Mountain Road had a peak hour volume of six vehicles from 12:45-1:45 PM; Kaiser Road north of State Route 177 had a peak of 41 vehicles from 8:45-9:45 AM and north of Lake Tamarisk Drive had 26 vehicles from 12:30-1:30 PM.

## **3.12.3 Potential Environmental Impacts**

### 3.12.3.1 Methodology

This section analyzes the existing transportation system in the area and addresses the potential transportation and circulation impacts resulting from development of the proposed Project.

### 3.12.3.2 Thresholds of Significance

The State Water Resources Control Board concludes that the Project may have significant impacts on transportation and traffic if the Project does any of the following:

- (a) Conflict with an applicable plan, ordinance or policy establishing measures of effectiveness for the performance of the circulation system, taking into account all modes of transportation including mass transit and non-motorized travel and relevant components of

the circulation system including but not limited to intersections, streets, highways and freeways, pedestrian and bicycle paths, and mass transit

- (b) Conflict with an applicable congestion management program, including, but not limited to level of service standards and travel demand measures, or other standards established by Riverside County congestion management agency for designated roads or highways
- (c) Result in a change in air traffic patterns, including either an increase in traffic levels or a change in location that results in substantial safety risks
- (d) Substantially increase hazards due to a design feature (e.g., sharp curves or dangerous intersections) or incompatible uses (e.g., farm equipment)
- (e) Result in inadequate emergency access and/or
- (f) Conflict with adopted policies, plans, or programs regarding public transit, bicycle, or pedestrian facilities, or otherwise decrease the performance or safety of such facilities

### 3.12.3.3 Environmental Impact Assessment

#### 3.12.3.3.1 *Construction Traffic*

Traffic generated from the movement of workers, materials, and equipment to the site will increase on local roads during the construction and to a lesser extent during operation. The primary route will be I-10 and Kaiser Road with a possible secondary route of Eagle Mountain Road when the landfill extends the road to the townsite. The peak construction work force is estimated at 209 lasting approximately 2 years of the entire 4-year construction schedule. Approximately 90 percent of the Project will have a construction workforce under 150 and approximately half the Project will have less than 100 workers.

The total off-site truck volume is estimated to be 925 semi-trailer trucks for the duration of the Project assuming that off-site trucks will be importing all the necessary construction materials such as steel linings, steel reinforcement, electrical components, etc. The peak off-site truck volume is estimated to be 75 trucks per month in Month 9. Over 80 percent of the Project construction schedule will produce less than 50 trucks per month with 27 months having less than 10 off-site trucks per month.

The peak daily on-site heavy truck construction traffic is estimated to be 258 trucks per day. Of the 258 peak on-site truck traffic, 80 percent (210) will be concrete round trips from an on-site concrete batch plant.

The Landfill EIR traffic study projected with the full operation of the landfill in 2010, Kaiser Road would handle 3,500 vehicles per day between State Route 177 and Lake Tamarisk and 3,500 vehicles per day north of Lake Tamarisk and maintain a level of service of "B." A "B" level of service provides a road where there is occasionally more than one vehicle in a queue, the average delay per vehicle is between 10 and 20 seconds and some drivers begin to consider the delay an inconvenience. The report also stated Kaiser Road could handle double the projected traffic from

the landfill project (Landfill EIS/EIR, 1996). Consequently, it is reasonably assumed that traffic generated by the proposed Project, with a construction peak of 258 trucks per day, will not cause significant traffic congestion or even create much roadway inconvenience within the Project area. Implementation of the Transportation Management Plan (TMP) will assist to further reduce potential construction-related traffic impacts.

The construction workforce will be divided approximately into three shifts. However, much of the management and management support personnel would operate during the day shift. Therefore, construction workforce traffic will be significantly reduced, in contrast to one shift, as a result of being spread over three shifts. Due to the existing infrastructure and the work shifts, no significant transportation impacts are anticipated.

The primary impacts to adjacent or nearby landowners would occur as a result of construction-related traffic. The traffic noise, dust, and traffic along the primary access routes using Kaiser Road may be an inconvenience to area property owners during the construction phase. However, the existing transportation infrastructure previously accommodated a population at the Eagle Mountain townsite of 1,859 in 1980 along with mining-related traffic (Census, 1990). The Project proposes to have three shifts working during the construction which will minimize traffic during the peak work months and the site will only have off-site truck traffic peaking at 89 trucks per month. Therefore, impacts resulting from construction-related traffic are expected to be minimal. If the proposed Eagle Mountain Landfill builds the extension to Eagle Mountain Road, this route could be used as an alternative to further reduce the low level effect on area residents.

#### 3.12.3.3.2 *Operational Traffic*

Operation of the proposed pumped storage facility requires a labor force of about 30 employees to staff the facility 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. This translates to approximately 60 daily one-way trips, assuming that workers travel in their own individual vehicles. Because employees would arrive and depart at different times throughout the day, this would generate less than 20 daily peak hour trips, even if every employee commutes alone.

Operation of the facility would also generate minor truck traffic during activities such as delivery and off-site waste shipments. Project operation is anticipated to generate up to four truck trips per day, which would not affect the level of service on study roadways and intersections.

#### Environmental Impact Assessment Summary:

The primary impacts to adjacent or nearby landowners will occur as a result of Project-related construction traffic. Based on employment numbers, the operational phase of the Project will not cause an increase in traffic which is substantial in relation to the existing traffic load and capacity of the street system. Regional emergency service vehicles have access to the site directly from I-10 at Kaiser Road. In addition, the Project will not cause area roads to exceed, either individually or cumulatively, a level of service standard established by Riverside County Congestion Management Agency.

- (a) *Would the project conflict with an applicable plan, ordinance or policy establishing measures of effectiveness for the performance of the circulation system, taking into account all modes of transportation including mass transit and non-motorized travel and relevant components of the circulation system including but not limited to intersections, streets, highways and freeways, pedestrian and bicycle paths, and mass transit?* No. The Project will not conflict with any plan, ordinance, or policy regarding the performance of the circulation system.
- (b) *Would the project conflict with an applicable congestion management program, including, but not limited to level of service standards and travel demand measures, or other standards established by the county congestion management agency for designated roads or highways?* No. The proposed Project will not conflict with any applicable congestion management program.
- (c) *Would the project result in a change in air traffic patterns, including either an increase in traffic levels or a change in location that results in substantial safety risks?* No. The proposed Project will not change air traffic patterns.
- (d) *Would the project substantially increase hazards due to a design feature (e.g., sharp curves or dangerous intersections) or incompatible uses (e.g., farm equipment)?* No. The proposed Project will not increase transportation hazards.
- (e) *Would the project result in inadequate emergency access?* No. Access for emergency services will be unaffected.
- (f) *Would the project conflict with adopted policies, plans, or programs regarding public transit, bicycle, or pedestrian facilities, or otherwise decrease the performance or safety of such facilities?* No. Conflicts with public transit, bicycle or pedestrian facilities will occur.

**Impact 3.12-1 Construction-related Traffic.** The Project will cause an increase in traffic that is not substantial in relation to the existing traffic load and capacity of the street system. The Project will not decrease a level of service standard established by Riverside County. This impact is considered *potentially significant and subject to the mitigation program* (MM AQ-6, PDF LU-1, and PDF LU-2).

Air Quality mitigation measure (MM AQ-6) is proposed to reduce impacts to air quality, in addition, mitigation measure will also reduce impacts to traffic; whereas, MM AQ-6 requires the construction contractor to develop and implement a Transportation Management Plan for employees, including provisions for ridesharing, use of shuttle transit for Project employees, and provision of on-site food service to reduce vehicle trips, where feasible. The Transportation Management Plan will also consider availability of local housing that can be secured for use by a voluntary portion of the employees throughout the construction period. (*See Section 3.15 Air Quality for further discussion.*)

In addition PDF LU-1 and PDF LU-2 will also reduce traffic impacts. These project design features specify that construction access to and from the substation site will be from the Eagle Mountain Road exit and follow the Frontage Road east to the site. In addition, 2 weeks prior to beginning

construction, notices shall be posted locally stating hours of operation for construction near the community of Desert Center and along State Route 177. (See Section 3.9 Land Use and Public Services for further discussion.)

**Impact 3.12-2 Operational Traffic.** This impact would be considered *less than significant*. Daily traffic, including service and delivery trucks, will be approximately 64 one-way trips.

### **3.12.4 Mitigation Program**

The existing infrastructure to support the work force and anticipated activities is in place and will absorb the changes with no significant or lasting impacts. The Project is not anticipated to have a significant impact on traffic in the Project area as the proposed construction traffic will be dispersed through three shifts, and peak off-site trucks will total only 75 per month. The roads used for access are adequate to handle the traffic volume and provide an acceptable level of service.

**MM AQ-6. Transportation Management Plan.** The Licensee shall be responsible to develop and implement a Transportation Management Plan (TMP) for employees, including provisions for ridesharing, use of shuttle transit for Project employees, and provision of on-site food service to reduce vehicle trips, where feasible. The TMP shall also consider availability of local housing that can be secured for use by a voluntary portion of the employees throughout the construction period. The TMP will target a minimum 25% reduction in employee vehicle trips.

**PDF LU-1. Construction Access.** Construction access to/from the substation site will be from the Eagle Mountain Road exit and follow the Frontage Road east to the site. The Contractor will be responsible for monitoring construction access points.

**PDF LU-2. Construction Monitoring.** Two weeks prior to beginning construction, notices shall be posted locally stating hours of operation for construction near the Desert Center community and along State Route 177.

No additional mitigation has been identified or is required.

### **3.12.5 Level of Significance after Implementation of the Mitigation Program**

**Impact 3.12-1 Construction-related Traffic.** The mitigation program includes the development and implementation a TMP (MM AQ-6) which will control construction traffic onto the site and within the Project vicinity. Further, PDF LU-1 and PDF LU-2 control site access and require public noticing. With adherence to MM AQ-6, PDF LU-1, and PDF LU-2, potential traffic impacts would be *less than significant*.

**Impact 3.12-2 Operational Traffic.** This impact is *less than significant*, and no mitigation is required.

No residual impacts to transportation would occur with Project implementation.