4.7 Transportation and Traffic

This section evaluates the 2045 General Plan Update's potential impact on the local and regional transportation system in Santa Maria, including potential impacts to vehicle miles traveled (VMT). The regulatory setting in this section is based on the City's General Plan Environmental Existing Conditions Report (City of Santa Maria 2020) and the current 2011 General Plan Circulation Element. The analysis in this section is based, in part, on the updated Circulation Element that is a component of the 2045 General Plan Update, on the basis that the updated Circulation Element will update setting information in the 2011 General Plan Circulation Element. The analysis in this section is also based, in part, on the City of Santa Maria travel demand model, evaluated by GHD in June 2025.

4.7.1 Setting

The City of Santa Maria is served by an extensive network of freeways, arterials, collectors, and local roads. The network provides a high level of north-south/east-west connectivity with adjacent counties (i.e., San Luis Obispo, Ventura, and Kern Counties) by way of United States Highway 101 (U.S. 101), State Route 135 (SR 135) and State Route 166 (SR 166) that traverse the city. SR 135 and SR 166 both junction State Route 1 (SR 1) to the west of the city.

a. Roadway Network and Functional Classifications

Santa Maria is served by a system of streets and paths that enable connections in the city and to the regional transportation system. They are classified by their function with different characteristics and accommodations for modes of travel and access to adjacent land uses. The system supports multiple modes of travel and contains network elements that support vehicular, bicycle, pedestrian, and transit travel. In addition, roadways in Santa Maria provide routes for truck hailing and industrial uses hauling. The roadway classifications serve as the City's policy guidance for the development of multi-modal streets and balance all network elements. Descriptions of roadway classifications and their characteristics in Santa Maria are described below. The location of existing roadways and their classifications are shown in Figure 4.7-1.

b. State Highways

U.S. 101 and State highways, city streets and county roads carry a large amount of traffic throughout Santa Barbara County. Given that the State highway network forms the primary backbone of the Santa Barbara County network, the State highway system within Santa Barbara County is described in further detail below.

State Route 1

SR 1 serves as a major north-south corridor traversing along most of the Pacific coastline of California. The route begins in Dana Point (I-5 Junction) and ends in Leggett (Junction 101). SR 1 is the longest route in California at approximately 655 miles.

Within Santa Barbara County, SR 1 is functionally a Principal/Minor Arterial facility. The route begins at the Cañada De Las Cruces at Junction U.S. 101 traversing north through the City of Guadalupe into San Luis Obispo County. SR 1 traverses to the west of the city of Santa Maria. The route encompasses approximately 51 miles.

SR 1 contains a combination of two to four lane conventional highway and two to four lane expressway sections. A two lane highway/expressway is one lane in each direction and a four lane highway/expressway is two lanes in each direction. This route serves as the major access arterial for surrounding communities i.e., Santa Maria, Guadalupe, Orcutt and Lompoc.

U.S. Highway 101

U.S. 101 serves as a major north-south coastal route extending from Los Angeles, California north through Oregon State ending in Tumwater, Washington. U.S. 101 is approximately 1,540 miles.

Within Santa Barbara County, U.S. 101 begins along the southern coast of Santa Barbara at the Santa Barbara/Ventura County line traversing north to the City of Santa Maria at the Santa Maria Way Interchange to SR 166 East Interchange. The route encompasses approximately 91 miles.

U.S. 101 contains a combination of four-six lane freeway/expressway lane sections. This route serves as the major access freeway/expressway for surrounding communities i.e., Carpinteria, Santa Barbara, Goleta, Solvang, Buellton, Orcutt, and Santa Maria.

State Route 135 (Broadway)

SR 135 serves as a western north-south bypass corridor of U.S. 101 in northern Santa Barbara County. The route begins in Los Alamos (Junction US 101) passing north through Santa Barbara County to the SR 1 junction. At the SR 1 junction SR 135 heads east through the Orcutt community and further north to the City of Santa Maria, where it is known as Broadway. Broadway continues north through the city to the U.S. 101 interchange.

Broadway is functionally a Minor Collector/Principal Arterial facility. Approximately the first 9.6 miles is a 2-lane conventional highway, the next 7.1 miles is a 4-lane freeway/expressway and the remainder of its length is a four and six-lane conventional highway. This route serves as the major access arterial for surrounding communities i.e., Santa Maria, Orcutt and Los Alamos, and encompasses approximately 21 miles.

State Route 166

SR 166 serves as an east-west corridor connecting the Central Coast to the southern San Joaquin Valley. The west end route begins at SR 1 in Guadalupe, traversing approximately 11 miles east and ending at the U.S. 101 interchange within the city. The portion of SR 166 within the City boundaries is referred to as Main Street and is designated as a two to four-lane Primary Arterial.

East of the U.S. 101, SR 166 begins just north of Santa Maria at Junction 101 (San Luis Obispo County) traversing eastward along the San Luis Obispo/Santa Barbara County line into Kern County ending at SR 99 Junction near Mettler. This portion of the route is approximately 100 miles. SR 166 contains a combination of two-lane Principal and Minor Arterial to four-six lane Principal Arterial Conventional Highway.

Betteravia Road

Betteravia Road from U.S. 101 to Broadway (SR 135) is on the National Highway System. Even though this segment of Betteravia Road is still under the city's jurisdiction, the National Highway System designation helps to prioritize available federal funding for this segment of Betteravia Road.

c. Arterials, Collectors, and Local Roadways

The City of Santa Maria's circulation system is composed of a wide range of transportation facilities that serve two basic functions, mobility and land access. Arterials serve major activity centers, as well as neighboring areas, and the highest traffic volume corridors to provide a network of continuous routes and facilitate both local and inter-regional travel. Collectors provide local access to the overall roadway network, channeling traffic from local roadways into the arterial network. Local roads provide direct access to neighboring land and primarily facilitate local travel.

Table 4.7-1 identifies the roadway classification facility types in the current Circulation Element.

Table 4.7-1 Current Circulation Element Roadway Classification

Facility Type	Emphasis (Mobility versus Land Access)
Freeway	Reserved for limited access, uncontrolled, grade separated facilities, this classification includes US 101. The Freeway provides a high degree of mobility with no direct land access.
Primary Arterial	Provide mobility with intermittent access to Secondary Arterials with minimal direct land access.
Secondary Arterial	Provide mobility via access to Collector Roads and some Local Streets and accommodate access to major traffic generating land uses.
Collector Road	Connect Local Streets with Secondary Arterials and, occasionally, Primary Arterials, and also provide access to major land uses.
Local Streets	Provide access to adjacent land uses as well as access to Collector Roads.
Minor Streets	Provide access to adjacent land uses as well as to Local Streets and, occasionally, Collector Roads. Minor Streets occur only within and serve only residentially-zoned properties.
Roundabouts	Circular intersections that feature, among other important geometric components, a central island, a circulatory roadway, and splitter islands on each approach. Key to the proper implementation of these facilities is the understanding that roundabouts rely upon two basic and important principles: 1) Speed reduction through the facility, achieved through geometric design, which assures optimal operational benefits and safety enhancement; and, 2) The yield-at-entry rule, which requires traffic entering the intersection to yield to traffic that is traveling in the circulatory roadway when conflicts occur between them.

Source: Santa Maria General Plan Circulation Element, 2011

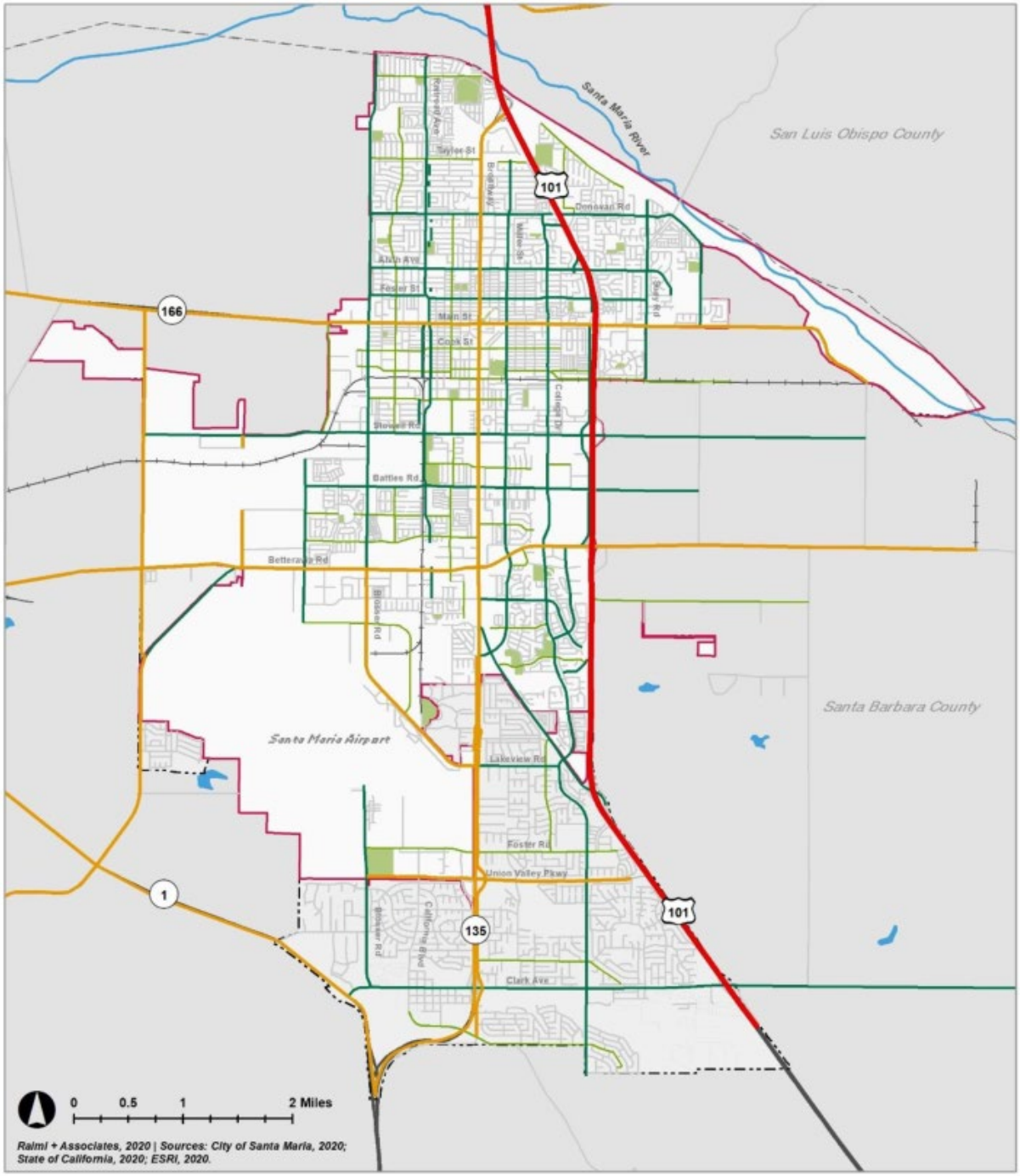
A map of major roadways by functional classification from the current Circulation Element is provided in Figure 4.7-1.

d. Pedestrian and Bicycle Network

Active Transportation Plan

The 2020 Santa Maria Active Transportation Plan was adopted by the City Council in January 2021. The Active Transportation Plan is a planning effort led by the City of Santa Maria to facilitate the design and implementation of a connected bicycle and pedestrian network to provide safe, affordable, and accessible transportation alternatives to the community.

Figure 4.7-1 Current Circulation Element Roadway Functional Classification



Existing and Planned Bikeways

In the current Circulation Element, existing and planned bicycle facilities are categorized based on the four classifications recognized by Caltrans, along with three subclassifications. These include:

- Class I Shared Use Paths. Class I shared use paths are completely separated rights-of-way designated for the exclusive use of bicycles and pedestrians, with crossflows by motorists minimized. Caltrans standards require a minimum width of eight feet for a one-way Class I bike path.
- Class II Bicycle Lanes. Class II bicycle lanes provide a striped or buffered right-of-way designated for the exclusive or semi-exclusive use of bicycles with through-travel by motor vehicles or pedestrians prohibited, but with vehicle parking and crossflows by pedestrians and motorists. Caltrans standards generally require a minimum width of four feet for a Class II bicycle lane.
- Class III Bicycle Routes. Class III bicycle routes are signed routes for bicyclists on low-speed, low-volume streets where lanes are shared with drivers. Caltrans standards for Class III bicycle routes are incorporated into roadway width requirements.
- Class IV Separated Bikeways. Class IV separated bikeways are on-street bicycle facilities with a physical barrier between the bicycle space and motor vehicle lanes, including bollards, curbs, or parking. Caltrans standards require a minimum width of five feet for a one-way Class IV separated bikeway.

Bicycle-Transit Connections

The transit services of Santa Maria Regional Transit, The Breeze Bus, Clean Air Express, Guadalupe Flyer, and RTA-Route 10 all have buses that are equipped with bike racks capable of accommodating bicycles. This service enables riders to access destinations that are difficult to reach solely by bicycle, while it also expands the potential service area range of bus stops. Bicycle parking is not provided at most stops along these transit services, with the exception of the Santa Maria Transit Center. There are no reported bike lockers available for public use along the stops or at the Santa Maria Transit Center, but there are six reported bike lockers located at the Santa Maria Public Library.

Pedestrian Network

The Santa Maria Active Transportation Plan states that most trips begin and end as walking trips even when a car, bicycle, bus, or train is involved. Like the City of Santa Maria's existing bikeway network, the city's pedestrian conditions vary widely. Some locations have a comprehensive sidewalk network with crossings and signage, while infrastructure is limited in other locations.

e. Transit

This section describes the existing transit services in Santa Maria and regional services provided in Santa Barbara County and southern San Luis Obispo County. In addition, the City is currently updating its Short Range Transit Plan. This document focuses on service recommendations in four categories: performance improvement, service enhancement, policy, and innovation/technology.

The five transit service providers currently available to the residents of Santa Maria include:

- **Santa Maria Regional Transit (SMRT)**. The City of Santa Maria operates SMRT's local fixed route, regional bus service, and on-demand Microtransit and ADA paratransit bus services. SMRT ridership demographics reflect a broad cross-section of the service area, including seniors, persons with disabilities, K-12 students, college students, working professionals, tourists and

riders who choose to use transit instead of driving. Transit ridership is rapidly growing and is expected to continue to grow over the years to come. The routes currently provide public transportation to local employment centers including schools, health care facilities, and major attractors (shopping centers, educational government facilities, medical and other uses). These trips are matched with services that extend to neighborhoods within the city (City of Santa Maria 2025).

- **The Breeze Bus.** The Breeze Bus is a commuter service between Santa Maria, Vandenberg Air Force Base, Lompoc, Los Alamos, Buellton, and Solvang that operates Monday through Friday. This objective of this transit service is to accommodate working commuters with three trips daily.
- **The Guadalupe Flyer.** The Guadalupe Flyer is a single route, connecting destinations around Guadalupe with the Town Center Mall and Transit Center in Santa Maria, traveling approximately 12 miles from Guadalupe on SR 166.
- **Clean Air Express.** The Clean Air Express commuter bus service is a weekday commuter bus program serving residents of Lompoc, Santa Maria, Buellton, Solvang, and adjacent unincorporated areas commuting to their jobs in Goleta and Santa Barbara. The Clean Air Express is managed by SBCAG.
- **SMOOTH.** SMOOTH maintains and operates various contracts with local groups in Santa Barbara County to provide transportation assistance with emphasis for passengers requiring medical, physical, and social assistance. SMOOTH provides Senior Dial-A-Ride services in Santa Maria.
- **San Luis Obispo Regional Transit Authority**. San Luis Obispo Regional Transit Authority (SLORTA) offers local and regional bus service to the South County portion of San Luis Obispo County and northern Santa Barbara County, including Santa Maria. Specifically, SLORTA links the Five Cities area (Arroyo Grande, Grover Beach, Oceano, Pismo Beach and Shell Beach), as well as Nipomo and Avila Beach.

4.7.2 Regulatory Setting

a. Federal Regulations

United States Department of Transportation

The United States Department of Transportation provides a number of grant programs, primarily for the construction and upgrading of major highways and transit facilities. Many of these grants are administered by the State and regional governments. Use of federal grant funding also invokes the National Environmental Protection Act in some cases.

b. State Regulations

Caltrans Authority over the State Highway System

Caltrans is responsible for the planning, design, construction and maintenance of all interstate freeways and state routes. It builds, maintains, and operates the State Highway System in California with a goal to facilitate the safe and efficient use of the state transportation system for all users. Standards established in Caltrans' 2020 Transportation Impact Study Guide focus on the VMT metric. The 2020 Transportation Impact Study Guide acts as a replacement for the 2002 Guide for the Preparation of Traffic Impact Studies but is only intended to be used with local land use projects and plans, not to be used for transportation projects on the State Highway System.

AB 32 and SB 375

With the passage of the Global Warming Solutions Act of 2006 (AB 32), the State committed itself to reducing statewide GHG emissions to 1990 levels by 2020. To meet the emission reduction goals of AB 32, the California's Sustainable Communities and Climate Protection Act, or SB 375, was enacted to direct the State's metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs) to develop a Sustainable Communities Strategy (SCS) that demonstrates how the region will meet its emission reduction targets. The MPO for the Santa Barbara County region, including Santa Maria, is the Santa Barbara County Association of Governments (SBCAG).

As a companion document to the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP), the SCS must include action items and financing decisions to achieve the GHG reduction target established by CARB. If the SCS does not meet the regional target, the MPO must produce an Alternative Planning Strategy that details an alternative plan to meet the target. SB 375 requires a greater level of land use planning coordination between local agencies (i.e., City of Santa Maria, Santa Barbara County) and MPOs (i.e., SBCAG) to meet the GHG targets established for Santa Barbara County.

SB 743

SB 743, signed into law in 2013, directed OPR to develop revisions to the *CEQA Guidelines* by July 1, 2014 to establish new criteria for determining the significance of transportation impacts and define alternative metrics instead of traffic level of service. SB 743 requires the new criteria to "promote the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, the development of multimodal transportation networks, and a diversity of land uses." It also states that alternative measures of transportation impacts may include "vehicle miles traveled, vehicle miles traveled per capita, automobile trip generation rates, or automobile trips generated." SB 743 changes the way that public agencies evaluate the transportation impacts of projects under CEQA by recognizing that roadway congestion, while an inconvenience to drivers, is not itself an environmental impact (Public Resource Code [PRC] Section 21099, subdivision [b][2]).

c. Local Regulations

Santa Barbara County Association of Governments Connected 2050 Regional Transportation Plan and Sustainable Communities Strategy

SBCAG is required by State and federal law to prepare, update, and adopt a RTP every four years. The most recent update to the RTP was completed by SBCAG in 2021 (Connected 2050 RTP/SCS) and sets forth the long-range transportation planning goal describing how the region will meet its transportation needs for the 30-year period from 2020 to 2050. The Connected 2050 RTP/SCS provides a collective vision for the region's future that balances transportation and housing needs with social, economic, and environmental goals. The Connected 2050 RTP/SCS helps guide future planning efforts and policy decisions that affect transportation, including its relationship with housing and land use, with the goal to reduce regional greenhouse gas emissions. The Connected 2050 RTP/SCS is based, in part, on SBCAG's Regional Growth Forecast which projects population and employment data to 2050. SBCAG designates Regional Housing Needs Allocation to jurisdictions based on the Regional Growth Forecast.

The Connected 2050 RTP/SCS includes five goal areas – Environment, Mobility & System Reliability, Equity, Health & Safety, and Prosperous Economy – with respective policies to meet each goal areas, which are expected to result in significant benefits to the region, not only with respect to transportation and mobility, but also economic activity, safety, and social equity (SBCAG 2025).

Santa Maria Active Transportation Plan

The Santa Maria Active Transportation Plan was adopted by the City Council in January 2021. The Active Transportation Plan updates the 2009 Bikeway Master Plan and serves as a guidance document intended to support the provision of a connected bicycle and pedestrian network to provide safe, affordable, and accessible transportation choices in Santa Maria. Consistent with the 2017 Regional Transportation Planning Guidelines, this Active Transportation Plan emphasizes the need for both active transportation infrastructure planning and non-infrastructure program strategies to help meet the City's goals for transportation mobility and accessibility. Active transportation improvements contribute to parallel state and federal goals related to air quality compliance and climate change initiatives, including compliance with the California Complete Streets Act (AB 1358) and the Americans with Disabilities Act, as well as environmental justice and social equity initiatives to provide healthier mobility choices to disadvantaged communities.

Santa Maria Airport Land Use Compatibility Plan

Adopted in January of 2023, the Airport Land Use Compatibility Plan for the Santa Maria Airport is provided by SBCAG's Airport Land Use Commission. The Airport Land Use Commission reviews land use plans and development proposals within Airport Influence Areas. Specifically, the Plan seeks to protect the public from the adverse effects of aircraft noise, to ensure that people and facilities are not concentrated in areas susceptible to aircraft accidents, and to ensure that no structures or activities encroach upon or adversely affect the use of navigable airspace. These plans also provide land use compatibility policies and criteria applicable to local jurisdictions in their preparation or amendments of General Plans.

Santa Maria Regional (formerly Area) Transit Short Range Transit Plan Update

In 2018, the City of Santa Maria hired a consultant to update to its Short Range Transit Plan. This plan is the guiding document for the City's public transit program. Before this update, the most recent full update was completed in 2008, with a subsequent update in 2015 that focused on Santa Maria Regional Transit's (SMRT's) evening service and fare policy. In 2021 the City prepared an Addendum to the Short Range Transit Plan incorporating post-COVID route and schedule revisions. The current Short Range Transit Plan includes a series of service recommendations in four categories: performance improvement, service enhancement, policy, and innovation/technology.

Santa Maria Downtown Multimodal Streetscape Plan

The Downtown Multimodal Streetscape Plan was adopted in January 2019 to guide the transformation of Santa Maria's Downtown streets into vibrant, multimodal corridors. Funded through a Caltrans Sustainable Communities Grant, the plan builds on the City's Downtown Specific Plan and Caltrans' Main Street, California program to promote Complete Streets principles. The plan provides conceptual design guidance for Broadway and Main Street, aiming to improve safety, walkability, and livability while accommodating all users—pedestrians, bicyclists, transit riders, and vehicles. Key goals include reducing lane widths, adding bike facilities, widening sidewalks, and enhancing intersections with traffic calming and landscaping. The plan emphasizes community engagement and reflects input from extensive public outreach, prioritizing beautification, connectivity, and economic revitalization. While the plan does not constitute final design approval, it establishes a framework for future engineering and implementation phases in partnership with Caltrans and identifies potential funding strategies for phased improvements.

4.7.3 Impact Analysis

a. Methodology and Significance Thresholds

Methodology

VMT measures the amount of travel for all vehicles in a geographic region over a given period of time, typically a one-year period. VMT is calculated by adding up all the miles driven by all the cars and trucks on all the roadways in a region.

The analysis in this section is based, in part, on the City of Santa Maria travel demand model, which maintains a local traffic model for future traffic conditions for all major roadways in the city and along the Santa Maria Valley. The model consists of a base-year scenario (existing/baseline conditions) using the most recent data available, and a 2045 future year scenario (future conditions). The City of Santa Maria travel demand model is a trip-based model and identifies the following estimates:

- Residential VMT per household was estimated based on the VMT attributable to home-based trip productions, to and from residences in Santa Maria and the annexation area.
- VMT per employee was estimated based on the VMT associated with home-based work trips, to and from places of employment in Santa Maria and the annexation area.

Significance Thresholds

CEQA Guidelines Appendix G provides the following significance thresholds to determine if a project would have a potentially significant impact on transportation. For the purposes of this EIR, implementation of the 2045 General Plan Update may have a significant adverse impact if it would:

1. Conflict with a program, plan, ordinance or policy addressing the circulation system, including transit, roadway, bicycle and pedestrian facilities;
2. Conflict or be inconsistent with CEQA Guidelines section 15064.3, subdivision (b);
3. Substantially increase hazards due to a geometric design feature (e.g., sharp curves or dangerous intersections) or incompatible use (e.g., farm equipment); or
4. Result in inadequate emergency access.

The methodology for assessing impacts under thresholds 1, 3 and 4 is qualitative in nature and considers the existing regulations in place that would minimize potential impacts related to transit, roadway, bicycle and pedestrian facilities; geometric design features; and emergency access.

The analysis of whether the project would conflict or be inconsistent with CEQA Guidelines Section 15064.3(b) describes specific considerations for analyzing transportation impacts pursuant to SB 375. CEQA Guidelines Section 15064.3(b) states that VMT is “generally” the most appropriate measure of transportation impacts. No particular methodology or metric is mandated by Section 15064.3(b). Instead, the choice of methodology and metric is left to the discretion of the lead agency, bearing in mind the criteria the legislature had in mind for determining the significance of transportation impacts in SB 743. These were expressed in PRC Section 21099(b)(1), which states: “[t]hose criteria shall promote the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, the development of multimodal transportation networks, and a diversity of land uses.”

The assessment of VMT impacts for this EIR was determined by utilizing the City of Santa Maria travel demand model to forecast the typical daily weekday rates of VMT per household attributable

to the residential population of Santa Maria, and VMT per employee attributable to jobs in Santa Maria.

SB 375 requires CARB to develop and set regional targets for greenhouse gas emission reductions from passenger vehicles. These targets are based on detailed calculations of the reduction in greenhouse gas emissions needed from various sectors of the economy in order to achieve the State's overall greenhouse gas reduction goals. In accordance with CEQA Guidelines Section 15064.7(c), Thresholds of Significance, the City of Santa Maria has elected to adopt the VMT reduction target set by CARB for the SBCAG region as the threshold of significance for VMT impact determination. Using this threshold, VMT impacts would be considered potentially significant if the forecasted rate of residential VMT per household or VMT per employee for the project were to exceed 83 percent of the existing rate of VMT in each category (i.e., at least a 17% reduction in per-unit VMT would be required for an impact to be considered less than significant).

Table 4.7-2 summarizes the existing weekday daily rates of VMT and corresponding significance thresholds. The existing daily rate of residential VMT per household is estimated to be 52.2 miles and the existing daily rate of VMT per employee is estimated to be 11.1 miles per employee. VMT impacts resulting from the plan would therefore be considered significant if the forecasted year 2045 rate of residential VMT per capita under the proposed General Plan were to exceed 43.3 miles, or if the forecasted year 2045 rate of VMT per employee were to exceed 9.2 miles.

Table 4.7-2 VMT Impact Thresholds

Scenario	Residential VMT per Household	VMT per Employee
Existing Condition	52.2	11.1
Significant Impact Threshold (83 percent of Existing rate)	**43.3**	**9.2**

Source: Santa Maria Travel Demand Model, GHD, June 2025

b. Project Impacts and Mitigation Measures

Threshold:	Would the project conflict with a program, plan, ordinance or policy addressing the circulation system, including transit, roadway, bicycle and pedestrian facilities?

Impact TRA-1 THE 2045 GENERAL PLAN UPDATE WOULD NOT CONFLICT WITH THE CONNECTED 2050 RTP/SCS, THE SANT MARIA ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION PLAN, OR ANY OTHER APPLICABLE PROGRAM, PLAN, ORDINANCE, OR POLICY RELEVANT TO THE TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM. THIS IMPACT WOULD BE LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT.

The 2045 General Plan Update would result in additional residential and commercial density, which would increase multimodal trips (vehicle, bicycle, pedestrian, and transit) onto the circulation network. This increase in multiple modes of travel would be in conformance with the goals and policies contained in the following plans affecting the City's circulation network:

- SBCAG Connected 2050 RTP/SCS
- Local Roadway Safety Plan
- Active Transportation Plan

A brief discussion of the 2045 General Plan's consistency with SBCAG's Connected 2050 RTP/SCS, the City's Local Roadway Safety Plan, and the City's Active Transportation Plan is provided below.

Connected 2050 RTP/SCS

The 2045 General Plan Update includes policies in the Circulation Element that facilitate development to promote regional transportation goals included in the Connected 2050 RTP/SCS to balance transportation and housing needs with social, economic, and environmental goals. These policies include:

Policy CIR-1.1: Complete Street planning and design. Ensure that complete streets infrastructure improves transportation choices for pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists, and public transportation riders ~~and that users~~ of all ages and abilities. ~~are considered and included in the planning, design, approval, construction, and operation of new streets, and the alteration and maintenance phases of existing streets.~~

Policy CIR-1.2: Complete Streets construction. Construct City streets and ~~require new~~ private streets to be constructed and maintained to the extent feasible in accordance with the Street Network, Bikeway Network, and Pedestrian Priority Improvement Network diagrams, the Active Transportation Plan, and standards established by the City Engineer that should be consistent with accepted standards such as the National Association of City Transportation Officials (NACTO) street design guidelines.

Policy CIR-1.3: Complete Streets in new development. Condition approvals of new development with street improvements and access provisions, to the extent feasible, that would be necessary to maintain multimodal operating standards and require complete street amenities consistent with the General Plan and accepted standards for new public and private streets.

Action CIR-1.3.1: Update the Santa Maria Municipal Code to establish active transportation infrastructure standards for new development, such as minimum requirements for bicycle storage/lockers and requiring integration with existing nearby bicycle, pedestrian, and transit infrastructure.

Policy CIR-2.2: Transportation planning. Update and implement transportation plans to be consistent with the General Plan.

Action CIR-2.2.1: Continue to participate in circulation and transportation planning with Santa Barbara County, Santa Barbara County Association of Governments (SBCAG), and the State of California.

Action CIR-2.2.2: Seek inclusion in federal, state, and regional transportation improvement plans that support local capital improvements. These include the Federal Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP), the State Transportation Improvement Plan (STIP), the Santa Barbara County Regional Transportation Improvement Program (RTIP), and the County Regional Transportation Program (RTP).

Policy CIR-6.1: Public transit service and financial stability. Maintain and enhance convenient, safe, and reliable transit services..

Action CIR-6.1.1: Maintain the current level of bus services and expand such services as required when demand levels increase, covering new developments and underserved areas. This may include implementing flexible transit service (also known as microtransit) for off-peak hours, or providing night and weekend services where feasible.

Action CIR-6.1.3: Ensure transit services are affordable and accessible for people of every age, ability, or income. Serve disadvantaged communities, transit-dependent individuals, and major employment centers, ensuring that all stops and stations are ADA compliant.

Action CIR-6.1.5: Collaborate with regional transit agencies on coordinated scheduling to ensure seamless transfers, facilitating inter-city travel and access to regional employment centers and attractions.

Action CIR-6.1.6: Identify and secure stable funding sources for transit operations, maintenance, and capital projects. Explore federal, state, regional, and local funding opportunities, including potential value capture mechanisms from Transit-Oriented Development.

Policy CIR-6.4: Transit-supportive land use and urban design. Promote Transit Oriented Development (TOD) by encouraging and incentivizing mixed-use, compact developments around existing and planned transit stops and corridors.

Action CIR-6.4.1: Adopt accessible citywide street design standards that support transit operations and active transportation. Plan new developments with direct pedestrian and bike connections to transit stops and ensure building frontages are accessible to transit users.

Action CIR-6.4.2: Integrate transit planning and City planning efforts, including land use, housing, economic development, and environmental plans for a holistic approach to development. Require new development and redevelopment sites to provide transit stops consistent with Santa Maria Regional Transit Standards and documents.

Action CIR-6.4.3: Action CIR-6.4.3: Adopt comprehensive transit design guidelines that provide clear direction for planners and developers on designing new developments and redevelopments that integrate transit. These guidelines should:

- Prioritize pedestrian and bicycle connections to transit stops, for safe, direct, and comfortable routes.
- Promote building orientation and entrances that face the street and transit stops, rather than being set back behind parking.
- Incentivize mixed-use development that places residential, commercial, and civic uses within easy walking distance of transit.
- Incorporate streetscape elements that enhance the pedestrian experience and encourage transit use, such as wide sidewalks, street trees, inviting public spaces, and appropriate lighting.
- Provide guidance on integrating transit stops directly into development sites for maximum convenience and visibility.
- Encourage human-scaled architecture and design that contributes to a vibrant and active public realm around transit facilities.

Policy CIR-7.1: Reduce VMT. Reduce VMT in accordance with the reduction target set by the California Air Resources Board (CARB) for the Santa Barbara County Association of Governments (SBCAG) region ~~below regional averages on~~ a "per resident" and "per employee" basis. ~~and disperse peak hour traffic to better utilize the existing and planned transportation infrastructure.~~

Action CIR-7.1.1: Maintain VMT thresholds consistent with State guidelines for use in evaluating potential traffic impacts from projects subject to CEQA.

Policy CIR-7.2: Prioritize land use development patterns that reduce VMT. In existing and future planned areas of the city, prioritize infill and mixed-use development and encourage new development in close proximity to existing employment, housing, schools, commercial centers, and other services and amenities.

With implementation of the policies included in the Circulation Element, the plan would encourage alternative travel, equitable access, and a reduction in vehicle trips, consistent with the regional transportation goals of the Connected 2050 RTP/SCS.

Santa Maria Active Transportation Plan

The Active Transportation Plan serves as a guidance document intended to support the provision of a connected bicycle and pedestrian network to provide safe, affordable, and accessible transportation choices in Santa Maria. The following 2045 General Plan Circulation Element policies would support active transportation projects identified in the Active Transportation Plan:

Policy CIR-1.4: Bicycle and pedestrian facilities. Consistent with the Bikeway Network and Pedestrian Priority Improvement Network diagrams, develop bicycle and pedestrian facilities to meet the transportation and recreational needs of the residents throughout the city, and where possible, provide separate bikeway access to major destinations (e.g., schools, parks, and commercial and employment centers) to ensure safety.

Action CIR-1.4.1: Implement the bicycle and pedestrian projects identified in the Pedestrian Priority Improvement Network diagram and the Santa Maria Active Transportation Plan.

Action CIR-1.4.2: Pursue all applicable revenue sources for the implementation of bicycle and pedestrian facilities.

Policy CIR-1.5: Bicycle and pedestrian facilities in new development. Require pedestrian- and bicycle-friendly facilities consistent with the Bikeway Network and Pedestrian Priority Improvement Network diagrams and the Active Transportation Plan when reviewing and approving private development applications, General Plan or zoning changes, and specific plans.

Policy CIR-1.6: Multimodal street standards. Maintain and update street standards that serve not just automobile operations, but also multimodal movement and adjacent land uses, including pedestrians, motorists, bicyclists, and transit riders of all ages and abilities, in a form that is compatible with and complementary to adjacent land uses, and promotes connectivity between uses and areas.

Policy CIR-5.1: Vision Zero. Advance efforts to eliminate traffic fatalities and serious injuries attributable to collisions on City streets by developing and implementing a "Vision Zero" strategy to reduce traffic fatalities and serious injuries to zero while increasing safe, healthy, and equitable mobility for all.

Action CIR-5.1.1: Monitor collision data and implement countermeasures to address identified collision patterns.

Action CIR-5.1.2: Implement safety improvements, including improvements consistent with those recommended by the Santa Maria Local Roadway Safety Plan (LRSP).

Policy CIR-5.2: Safe Routes to School. Promote pedestrian safety and connectivity between homes and schools by implementing infrastructure improvements (e.g., sidewalks, crosswalks, traffic calming measures, and bike lanes) to ensure safe, accessible pathways for students.

Policy CIR-6.3: Integrated multimodal infrastructure. Develop a multimodal transit system that works for walking, biking, and shared mobility.

The 2045 General Plan Update would ensure adequate bicycle and pedestrian facilities are provided to promote safe multimodal circulation, and plan policies would be further supported by active transportation projects in the Active Transportation Plan. Therefore, the 2045 General Plan Update would not conflict with the Active Transportation Plan.

Mitigation Measures

No mitigation is required because this impact would be less than significant.

Threshold:	Would the project conflict or be inconsistent with CEQA Guidelines section 15064.3, subdivision (b)?

Impact TRA-2 THE FUTURE (2045) CITYWIDE RATES OF VMT WITH THE 2045 GENERAL PLAN UPDATE WOULD NOT MEET THE 17% VMT REDUCTION TARGET REQUIRED TO BE CONSISTENT WITH CEQA GUIDELINES 15064.3(B). THERE ARE NO FEASIBLE GENERAL PLAN POLICIES OR MITIGATION MEASURES THAT COULD REDUCE CITYWIDE RATES OF VMT BELOW THE VMT REDUCTION TARGET. AS A RESULT, THIS WOULD BE A SIGNIFICANT AND UNAVOIDABLE IMPACT.

As described in Section 4.7.3(a), Methodology and Significance Thresholds, VMT impacts from the 2045 General Plan Update were analyzed using the City of Santa Maria travel demand model. VMT impacts would be considered significant if the forecasted rate of residential VMT per household of the project exceeded 43.3 miles or the VMT rate per employee for the project exceeded 9.2 miles. As shown in Table 4.7-3, the model-forecasted rates of residential VMT per household and VMT per employee for Future (Year 2045) conditions both exceed the significance threshold. Therefore, transportation impacts associated with VMT would be significant.

Table 4.7-3 Per Household and Per Employee Vehicle Miles Traveled

Scenario	VMT per Household	VMT per Employee
Existing/Baseline Conditions	52.2	11.1
Future (2045) Conditions	47.6	9.8
Significance Threshold	43.3	9.2
Impact Finding	Significant	Significant

Source: Santa Maria Travel Demand Model, GHD, June 2025

Although the overall average per-unit VMT in the horizon year does not meet the 17% VMT reduction target, it should be noted that the overall average per-unit VMT figure includes a mix of existing and future residential and non-residential developments. Table 4.7-4 shows the per-unit VMT of future development only as a separate calculation (i.e., what could be approved and built going forward under the 2045 General Plan Update.

Table 4.7-4 Vehicle Miles Traveled, Reduction from Existing

Scenario	VMT per Household	VMT per Employee
Existing/Baseline Conditions	52.2	11.1
Future (2045) Conditions	47.6	9.8
Reduction from Existing	-8.8%	-11.7%
Future Development Only	39.5	7.4
Reduction from Existing	-24.2%	-32.8%

Source: Santa Maria Travel Demand Model, GHD, June 2025

As shown in Table 4.7-4, evaluating future development alone (excluding existing development from the calculation) would meet CARB's VMT reduction target.

The 2045 General Plan Update includes policies in the Circulation Element that would shorten trips and increase the use of multi-modal transportation and thereby reduce per-unit VMT. These include:

> **Policy CIR-7.1: Reduce VMT**. Reduce VMT in accordance with the reduction target set by the California Air Resources Board (CARB) for the Santa Barbara County Association of Governments (SBCAG) region ~~below regional averages on~~ a "per resident" and "per employee" basis. ~~and disperse peak hour traffic to better utilize the existing and planned transportation infrastructure.~~
>
> > **Action CIR-7.1.1:** Maintain VMT thresholds consistent with State guidelines for use in evaluating potential traffic impacts from projects subject to CEQA.
>
> **Policy CIR-7.2: Prioritize land use development patterns that reduce VMT.** Prioritize infill and mixed-use development and encourage new development near existing employment, housing, schools, commercial centers, and other services and amenities.
>
> **Policy LU-4.3: Mixed-use development.** Support vertical and horizontal mixed-use development, integrating residential uses along Broadway and Main Street to promote a pedestrian-focused environment in the core of the city and reduce vehicle trips.

Potential future VMT impacts from individual developments in Santa Maria would be evaluated based on local VMT thresholds established by the City. While the potential impacts of individual developments in Santa Maria are speculative, and in spite of the fact that future development alone (excluding existing development from the calculation) would meet CARB's VMT reduction target, the combined Future (2045) conditions forecast for the 2045 General Plan Update does not meet the 17% VMT reduction target, and would be inconsistent with CEQA Guidelines Section 15064.3(b), which is a potentially significant impact.

Mitigation Measures

The 2045 General Plan Update includes policies which would reduce VMT to the extent feasible. However, given the legacy development pattern embodied in existing development in the city, there is no set of General Plan policies or mitigation measures that could feasibly reduce per-unit VMT below the threshold.

Significance After Mitigation

Because there is no set of General Plan policies or mitigation measures that could feasibly reduce per-unit VMT below the threshold beyond what has already been included, this impact would remain significant and unavoidable.

Threshold 3:	Would the project substantially increase hazards due to a geometric design feature (e.g., sharp curves or dangerous intersections) or incompatible use (e.g., farm equipment)?
Threshold 4:	Would the project result in inadequate emergency access?

Impact TRA-3 DEVELOPMENT FACILITATED BY THE 2045 GENERAL PLAN UPDATE WOULD COMPLY WITH STATE, SANTA MARIA FIRE DEPARTMENT, AND CITY REQUIREMENTS RELATED TO TRANSPORTATION DESIGN SAFETY AND EMERGENCY ACCESS. WITH ADHERENCE TO THESE REQUIREMENTS, THE 2045 GENERAL PLAN UPDATE WOULD NOT SUBSTANTIALLY INCREASE HAZARDS DUE TO A GEOMETRIC DESIGN FEATURE OR RESULT IN INADEQUATE EMERGENCY ACCESS, AND THIS IMPACT WOULD BE LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT.

The Santa Maria Municipal Code includes a set of standard construction details, which include, but are not limited to, general specifications, drainage details, curb, driveway, sidewalk and access ramp details, typical street section, water system details and sanitary sewer system details. As individual developments are proposed, project applicants would be required to follow appropriate design guidelines in implementing roadway improvements that are necessary to alleviate transportation hazards. Therefore, implementation of the 2045 General Plan Update would not substantially increase hazards due to a geometric design feature (e.g., sharp curves or dangerous intersections) or incompatible uses (e.g., farm equipment).

Construction activities associated with new development facilitated by the plan could temporarily impair emergency access points used for emergency access vehicles. However, any construction on State highway systems (i.e., U.S. 101, SR 135, and SR 166) would be required to create a temporary traffic control plan that adheres to the standards set forth in the most recent version of the California Manual of Uniform Traffic Control Devices (Caltrans 2014, revised 2025). Construction within a public easement or right-of-way would be required to obtain an encroachment permit from the City's Public Works Department. Accordingly, construction activities would not result in substantial impairment of emergency access in Santa Maria.

Operation of development facilitated by the 2045 General Plan Update could result in alterations to existing transportation infrastructure, including, but not limited to, sidewalks and driveways. Future development would be required to adhere to applicable state and City of Santa Maria Fire Department design standards for emergency vehicle access, such as California Code of Regulations Title 19, Article 3, Section 3.05 which requires access roads from every building to a public street to be all-weather hard-surfaced right-of-way not less than 20 feet in width.

In addition to existing State and local requirements, the 2045 General Plan Update proposes policies that would ensure transportation safety and maintain adequate emergency access. These policies include the following:

> **Policy CIR-1.3: Complete Streets in new development**. Condition approvals of new development with street improvements and access provisions, to the extent feasible, that would be necessary to maintain multimodal operating standards and require complete street amenities consistent with the General Plan and accepted standards for new public and private streets.

Action CIR-1.3.1: Update the Santa Maria Municipal Code to establish active transportation infrastructure standards for new development, such as minimum requirements for bicycle storage/lockers and requiring integration with existing nearby bicycle, pedestrian, and transit infrastructure.

Policy CIR-1.4: Bicycle and pedestrian facilities. Consistent with the Bikeway Network and Pedestrian Priority improvement Network diagrams, develop bicycle and pedestrian facili to meet the transportation and recreational needs of the residents throughout the city, and where possible, provide separate bikeway access to major destinations (e.g., schools, parks, and commercial and employment centers) to ensure safety.

Action CIR-1.4.1: Implement the bicycle and pedestrian projects identified in the Pedestrian Priority Improvement Network diagram and the Active Transportation Plan.

Action CIR-1.4.2: Pursue all applicable revenue sources for the implementation of bicycle and pedestrian facilities.

Policy CIR-1.9: Transportation studies. For all new larger developments or substantial improvements to existing development, require a transportation study to evaluate the potential effects on the transportation system associated with the proposed project prior to approval, including ensuring that the proposed project provides transportation amenities consistent with the General Plan. The requirement of transportation studies for new developments is at the discretion of City staff and determined on a case-by-case basis.

Policy CIR-1.10: Acceptable Traffic Levels of Service. ~~Multimodal operating standards~~. Maintain an acceptable peak hour level of service (LOS) of D or better, as determined using the most current edition of ~~based on~~ the Highway Capacity Manual (HCM) or other methodology formally adopted by the City Engineer, on all ~~at~~ arterial and collector roadways and at all signalized ~~street~~ intersections, except where achieving the LOS standard would result in unacceptable conditions for bicyclists, pedestrians, or transit users. Deficiency plans shall be required for developments that cause intersections to cross the LOS threshold. Provide low-stress travel conditions for bicyclists that achieve Bicycle Level of Traffic Stress (LTS) 2 or better on arterial and collector streets.

Traffic Impact Analyses: Traffic impact analyses (TIAs) shall be prepared using HCM-based methodologies or other methodology formally adopted by the City Engineer, consistent with the City's adopted traffic study guidelines.

Methodology: Where multiple methodologies are available to determine LOS, the City Engineer shall determine the appropriate analysis method based on facility type, context, and study purpose, including, as applicable:

- Control delay (seconds per vehicle) for signalized and unsignalized intersections; and
- HCM-defined performance measures for roadway segments, roundabouts, and other facilities.

Long-Range Planning Flexibility: For long-range planning horizons, area-wide planning efforts, or cumulative growth scenarios, LOS D need not be strictly maintained where the City determines that:

- Temporary or localized degradation of LOS is unavoidable; and

- Overriding transportation, land use, environmental, or community benefits justify the impact, supported by appropriate findings. Such determinations shall be made using HCM-based analysis or other methodology formally adopted by the City Engineer and documented in the applicable planning or environmental review documents. Downtown/Specific Plan Areas: Within designated specific plan areas or activity centers, including the Downtown Specific Plan area, projects that exceed City-established vehicle trip thresholds shall prepare a traffic impact analysis using HCM methodology or other methodology formally adopted by the City Engineer in accordance with City standards. Where the City determines that strict application of LOS D would conflict with adopted plan objectives, the City may approve alternative or equivalent transportation mitigation measures, including but not limited to multimodal improvements, transportation demand management strategies, or deficiency plans prepared consistent with State law.

Conditions of Development Approvals: Development approvals shall include conditions necessary to maintain or achieve LOS D unless alternative mitigation is approved pursuant to City policy.

Action CIR-1.10.1: Periodically review roadway and intersection performance using HCM metrics or other methodology formally adopted by the City Engineer and prioritize capital improvements to address identified deficiencies.

Policy CIR-1.11: Bicycle Level of Traffic Stress. Provide low-stress travel conditions for bicyclists that achieve Bicycle Level of Traffic Stress (LTS) 2 or better on arterial and collector streets (see the Bicycle Level of Traffic Stress standard above).

Policy CIR-2.1: Preservation of right-of-way. Require appropriate right-of-way dedications or public access easements of all new developments to facilitate the construction of transportation facilities shown in the Street Network, Bikeway Network, and Pedestrian Improvement Network diagrams as well as the bicycle and pedestrian projects recommended by the Active Transportation Plan, including protection of right-of-way for future streets and trails.

Policy CIR-5.2: Safe Routes to School. Promote pedestrian safety and connectivity between homes and schools by implementing infrastructure improvements (e.g., sidewalks, crosswalks, traffic calming measures, and bike lanes) to ensure safe, accessible pathways for students.

In addition, future development facilitated by the 2045 General Plan Update would be reviewed by City staff to ensure consistency with all applicable City and State design standards, including standards for project access points, location, and design, sight lines, roadway modifications, provisions for bicycle, pedestrian, and transit connections, and emergency access. As a result, these impacts would be less than significant.

Mitigation Measures

No mitigation is required because this impact would be less than significant.

4.7.4 Cumulative Impacts

A project's environmental impacts are "cumulatively considerable" if the "incremental effects of an individual project are significant when viewed in connection with the effects of past projects, the effects of other current projects, and the effects of probable future projects" (CEQA Guidelines Section 15065[a][3]). Regional cumulative impacts consider the City-wide impacts together with similar impacts of reasonably anticipated regional projects/programs. The general approach to cumulative impact analysis used in this EIR, as well as the determination of the cumulative impact analysis area, is discussed in Section 3, *Environmental Setting,* Subsection 3.3, *Cumulative Development*.

By its nature, a general plan considers cumulative impacts insofar as it considers cumulative development that could occur within the City Limits and annexation areas. All new development in the City and annexation areas would be required to comply with local regulations and policies related to the circulation system, including transit, roadway, bicycle and pedestrian facilities. Cumulative development in Santa Maria would be required to comply with 2045 General Plan Circulation Element policies. Accordingly, cumulative projects would have a less than significant impact related to conflicts with programs, plans, ordinances or policies addressing the circulation system.

Cumulative development could result in changes to regional baseline VMT conditions that conflict with *CEQA Guidelines* section 15064.3, subdivision (b) and therefore create a significant cumulative impact. As discussed in Impact TRA-2, implementation of the 2045 General Plan Update would not meet the 17% VMT reduction target required to be consistent with CEQA Guidelines Section 15064.3(b). Because the analysis for the 2045 General Plan Update is based on citywide VMT calculations in comparison to SBCAG regional VMT estimates, the 2045 General Plan's project-level significant and unavoidable impact on VMT implies that the 2045 General Plan Update would have a cumulatively considerable contribution toward regional cumulative VMT impacts. Therefore, cumulative VMT impacts would be significant, and the 2045 General Plan Update would have a cumulatively considerable contribution on VMT impacts.

Some types of transportation impacts are related to site- and project-specific characteristics, and conditions would not be significantly affected by other development outside Santa Maria. Compliance with applicable regulations and oversight, including Caltrans design guidelines, City design guidelines, and – for development outside Santa Maria – Santa Barbara County Fire Department standards would effectively reduce the potential for individual projects to create a cumulative transportation hazard or emergency access impacts within Santa Maria, as well as Santa Barbara County. Therefore, cumulative impacts related to transportation hazards and emergency access would be less than significant.

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