

SECTION 4: GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

4.1 - Project Environmental Setting

The City of Fresno's update to their General Plan includes a Planning Area that encompasses the same area that the existing 2025 General Plan encompassed. The Planning Area includes all areas within the City's current City limits, including the Fresno-Clovis Regional Wastewater Reclamation Facility, the areas within the current Sphere-of-Influence (SOI), and an area north of the City's most northeasterly portion of the City. The Planning Area encompasses approximately 106,027 acres that consists of approximately 68 percent within the City limits and approximately 32 percent outside of the City limits.

The Planning Area contains relatively flat terrain that slopes from northeast to southwest. The northern boundary of the Planning Area includes the San Joaquin River and steep bluffs that provide elevated views to the north. The Downtown area of the City is bounded by State Route 99 (SR-99) to the west and south, SR-41 to the east and south, and SR-180 to the north. Downtown is the urban core of the City with high-rise buildings that contain a variety of land uses. Many building within the Downtown area contain historic design elements. The suburbs of the City are located to the west, east, and north. These areas contain low-rise neighborhood building primarily dominated by single-family residential uses. Within the suburb areas, there are major thoroughfares including Herndon Avenue, Shaw Avenue, Ventura Avenue-Kings Canyon Road, Blackstone Avenue, and Clovis Avenue. South of the City is characterized by low-rise buildings with manufacturing, processing, and warehouse uses.

Current development within the Planning Area includes 186,840 dwelling units, 66.4 million square feet (msf) of commercial/office/public facility, 100,000 sf of mixed uses, and 72.8 msf of industrial uses. The Planning Area contains approximately 11,714 acres of agricultural land, 12,288 acres of open space, and 12,522 acres of vacant land. Existing agricultural land is primarily located in the southeastern and western portions of the Planning Area.

The Planning Area contains two major rail lines that generally traverse in a southeast to northwest direction. These railways include the Union Pacific Railroad line that is generally located along SR-99, and the BNSF Railway that diverges from the SR-99 in the southwest and travels through the downtown to the northwest.

There are three airports located within the City of Fresno including the Fresno-Yosemite International Airport located in the eastern portion of the Planning Area, the Fresno-Chandler Downtown Airport located west of downtown, and Sierra Sky Park Airport that is located on the northern portion of the Planning Area.

4.2 - Cumulative Environmental Setting

Section 15130 of the State CEQA Guidelines requires that an EIR discuss cumulative impacts of a project when the incremental effects of a project are cumulatively considerable. Cumulative impacts

are defined as an impact that is created as a result of the combination of the project evaluated in the Master EIR together with other projects causing related impacts. Cumulatively considerable means that the incremental effects of an individual project are considerable when viewed in connection with the effects of past projects, the effects of other current projects, and the effects of probable future projects. According to Section 15130(b) of the CEQA Guidelines, elements considered necessary to provide an adequate discussion of cumulative impacts of a project include either: (1) list of past, present, and probable future projects producing related or cumulative impacts; or (2) a summary of projection contained in an adopted General Plan or related planning document which is designed to evaluate regional or area-wide conditions.

The cumulative analysis discussed in this Master EIR is provided within each technical section in Section 5. A description of the cumulative impact study area is provided in the Environmental Setting for each technical section. The specific study area depends on the environmental issue that is analyzed.

Generally, a summary of projections contained in an adopted General Plan or related planning document was utilized to understand potential cumulative development. Due to recent approval of the High Speed Rail (HSR) project in the Fresno area, the HSR has been incorporated into the cumulative evaluations, as appropriate. Following is a general summary of projections contained in General Plans for agencies whose jurisdictions are located adjacent to the Planning Area. These jurisdictions include the County of Fresno, City of Clovis, and the County of Madera.

The County of Fresno General Plan was last adopted in the year 2000. The General Plan identified the year 2020 projections outside the sphere-of-influences for cities within the East Valley area, which is located east of Interstate 5. The population projection in the unincorporated areas was projected to be 101,542 people and the employment projection was 57,737 (County of Fresno, 2000). Additional development projects are currently proposed northeast of the City of Fresno Planning Area including Friant Ranch that contains approximately 3,000 residential units along with supporting land uses.

The City of Clovis General Plan was last adopted in the year 1993; the General Plan identified a population projection for full buildout at 182,775 people (City of Clovis, 1993). The employment projection was 89,238 (City of Clovis, 1993). Currently, the City of Clovis is updating their General Plan and development projections. These projections include approximately 179,300 new people and 75,400 new employees (City of Clovis, 2014).

The County of Madera General Plan was last adopted in the year 1995. The General Plan identified population and employment growth projections through the year 2010. These estimates included 177,071 people and 61,866 employees. Since the adoption of the County's General Plan, substantial new development projects have been proposed in the southern portion of the County and some of the development is proposed within close proximity of the City of Fresno Planning Area. Currently proposed development projects include Gateway, Gunner Ranch, Liberty Groves, North Fork Village, Tesoro Viejo, and River Ranch Estates. These projects include a substantial amount of residential units, approximately 23,000 units, as well as supporting uses such as commercial, public facilities, parks, and open space.