Implementing SB 743: The Change from LOS to VMT for CEQA Transportation Studies

Erik Ruehr, VRPA Technologies, Inc.

Chair, California SB 743 Task Force
Institute of Transportation Engineers – Western District

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Outline

- Introduction to SB 743
- Summary of Current Draft Guidelines (January 2016)
- Summary of Key ITE Comments
- Opportunities and Challenges
- Next Steps in SB 743 Process
- Preparing for Implementation
- Current SB 743 Activities
- Websites for More Information
- Comments/Questions
Introduction to SB 743

- SB 743 Passed in Fall of 2013
- Governors Office of Planning and Research (OPR) to Write New CEQA Guidelines for Transportation Analyses
- Reduced Emphasis on Roadway Capacity/Level of Service (LOS) Analysis
- Increased Emphasis on Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) or Similar Measures
- Purpose is to Encourage Smart Growth, Multimodal Travel and Infill Developments and Reduce Vehicle Travel
- Minimum Geographic Area: Transit Priority Areas
Summary of Key SB 743 Events Since Passage

- Preliminary Evaluation: December 2013
- Draft Guidelines: August 2014
- Revised Draft Guidelines: January 2016
VMT is performance measure. Auto delay is excluded.

Lead agencies can choose different thresholds if supported by substantial evidence.

Projects in transit areas may be exempted.

Induced travel required for roadway projects.

Qualitative analysis may be acceptable.

Two-year opt in period.
Tour-based analysis preferred over trip-based analysis
Don’t mix tour and trip-based methods in same analysis
Retail developments re-route trips. Focus on net change in VMT.
Don’t truncate VMT analysis at jurisdictional boundaries
VMT Screening/Exemptions

- Projects with less than 100 ADT exempt
- Map-based screening for residential and office projects
- Exemptions for projects near transit stations
VMT Thresholds

- Residential: VMT/capita 15% below regional average or city average
- Office: VMT/employee 15% below regional average
- Retail: Net decrease in VMT. Local-serving retail exempt.
- Mixed Use: Evaluate each component separately and take credit for internal capture
- Other Projects: To be determined by lead agency
- Development in areas assumed to be vacant in RTP/SCS are significant
Other Threshold Considerations

- Land Use Plans: Consistent with RTP/SCS and VMT/capita and employee lower than regional average
- RTP/SCS: Meet SB 375 targets and reduce VMT/capita
- Rural Projects Outside MPO’s: Thresholds may be determined on a case-by-case basis
- More stringent thresholds acceptable
Transportation Projects

- Exempt Projects: Auxiliary lanes, roundabouts, turn lanes, local streets, collector streets

- Induced travel analysis

- Sketch planning methods described for induced travel using elasticity (e.g. 0.8% increase in VMT per 1.0% increase in lane miles)

- VMT Threshold: Increase of less than 2,075,220 VMT/year (5,685 VMT/day)
Case Studies

- Sacramento Mixed-Use Development
- Mission Viejo Office Development
- Kern County Roadway Widening
Summary of Key ITE Comments

Comments Accepted
- VMT is most appropriate performance measure
- Provide significance thresholds for land development and roadway projects
- Allow two-year opt in period for lead agencies to adjust
- Provide case studies

Comments Partially Accepted
- Provide minimum thresholds for small projects that should not be subject to VMT analysis
- Allow large urban areas to be broken up into subregions for VMT comparisons
- Assist in providing tools for VMT calculation
Summary of Key ITE Comments (continued)

- Comments Not Accepted (Not Yet)
  - SB 743 should be limited (at least initially) to transit priority areas
  - Implement ITE’s recommended guidance in analyzing induced travel
  - SB 743 should not apply to goods movement
Opportunities and Challenges

Opportunities
- Facilitated environmental process for BRT, bicycle, and other environmentally-friendly projects
- Mitigation of VMT impacts could lead to development of complete streets projects and transit/bicycle/pedestrian improvements
- Greater awareness of VMT impacts and mitigation should reduce VMT and greenhouse gases

Challenges
- Methodology for VMT calculation for individual projects not well developed (especially small projects and projects outside of transportation model coverage areas)
- VMT mitigation not always feasible
- Small projects with VMT impacts may require a higher level of environmental study
- Mitigation strategies needed for roadway improvements in auto-oriented areas
Next Steps in SB 743 Process

- Final Guidelines and incorporation of SB 743 into CEQA by Natural Resources Agency (6 months)

- Opt-in Period

- Local Agency Thresholds

- Required Implementation
Current SB 743 Activities

- Early Implementers: Pasadena, San Francisco, Oakland

- SACOG/SCAG Study

- Caltrans
  - Interim Guidelines
  - Transportation Analysis Guide/Transportation Impact Study Guide Project

- Development of Local Guidelines
  - City of Los Angeles
  - San Diego ITE Section
Preparing for Implementation

- Determine new methodologies and thresholds for VMT-based analyses.
- Determine new procedures for requiring roadway improvements for development projects.
- Consider VMT fees for mitigation.
- Consider tiered environmental studies for small land development and roadway projects (to avoid preparation of an EIR).
- Consider updating transportation impact study guidelines.
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Websites for More Information

- California Governor’s Office of Planning and Research (OPR)
  www.opr.ca.gov
  Check: CEQA / Alt Transportation Metrics (SB 743)

- Institute of Transportation Engineers (ITE), Western District
  www.westernite.org
  Check: Legislation Around the District