



# VEHICLE MILES TRAVELED (VMT) - IMPLEMENTING SENATE BILL 743 (SB 743)

City of San Diego  
Development Services Department

INFORMATION  
BULLETIN  
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This Information Bulletin describes VMT transportation impact analysis as part of California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) compliance for discretionary project applications.

## I. BACKGROUND

In 2013, the State adopted Senate Bill (SB) 743, fundamentally changing transportation impact analysis as part of CEQA compliance. SB 743 better balances congestion management with statewide goals for infill development, promotion of public health through active transportation, and reduction of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions.

In Dec. 2018, the [Governor's Office of Planning and Research](#) (OPR) published a Technical Advisory on Evaluating Transportation Impacts in CEQA. This Technical Advisory provides recommendations on how to evaluate transportation impacts under SB 743. The recommendations include the elimination of auto delay, level of service (LOS), and other similar measures of vehicular capacity or traffic congestion as the basis for determining significant CEQA transportation impacts and replaces them with Vehicle Miles Travelled (VMT), as the preferred CEQA transportation metric. VMT is the number of trips multiplied by the trip length. The revised CEQA guidelines require lead agencies to evaluate VMT for CEQA transportation impacts starting July 1, 2020.

## II. CEQA TRANSPORTATION SIGNIFICANCE DETERMINATION THRESHOLDS

As part of the new analysis methodology, section O of the City's CEQA Significance Determination Thresholds was updated adding thresholds that account for increases in VMT, including:

1. Considering any conflicts with existing City plans or policies related to the transportation network;
2. VMT thresholds identified in the proposed [City of San Diego Transportation Study Manual](#) (TSM); and
3. Maintaining safety and necessary emergency access.

## III. TRANSPORTATION VMT CEQA REQUIREMENTS

Question B of the proposed CEQA Transportation Thresholds establishes VMT as the metric to evaluate transportation impacts in conformance with SB 743/CEQA. The TSM provides the following for VMT CEQA analysis in the City of San Diego:

1. Screening Criteria for land use and transportation projects to determine whether VMT analysis is required.
2. Significance Determination Thresholds that define acceptable levels of VMT and when mitigation measures are required. This process is governed by CEQA Guidelines Section 15064.7.
3. Analysis Methodology for evaluating VMT for land use and transportation projects.
4. Mitigation for projects that are found to have a significant impact based on the City's VMT significance thresholds. These projects are required to implement mitigation measures to reduce impacts to a less than significant level (or to the extent feasible). The TSM recommends/suggests mitigation measures known to reduce VMT and provides a methodology for evaluating their effectiveness.

During the transition from LOS to VMT as the metric for CEQA transportation impact analysis, all discretionary projects are required to conduct a CEQA VMT analysis. If the proposed project, through a 15162 analysis, is able to tier from a certified EIR – such as a Community Plan Update, Specific Plan or prior project – which relied upon a LOS analysis to assess CEQA transportation impacts, a CEQA VMT analysis may not be required.

## REFERENCES

- [CEQA Transportation Thresholds](#)
- [Transportation Study Manual](#)
- [Project Information Form](#)
- [CEQA GUIDELINES SECTION 15064.7](#)

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