

VMT Fact Sheet

What is SB 743?

SB 743 was signed into law in September 2013, initiating a process intended to fundamentally change transportation impact analysis under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). SB 743 eliminates automobile delay (level of service) and other traffic congestion measures as a basis for determining significant environmental impacts and replaces level of service (LOS) with a vehicle miles traveled (VMT) metric.

The intent of SB 743 is to balance the needs of congestion management with the statewide goals of reducing greenhouse gas emissions, realizing infill development, protecting public health through active transportation, and ensuring that the environmental impacts of traffic such as noise, air pollution, and safety concerns continue to be addressed and mitigated through CEQA.

What is VMT?

Vehicle miles traveled (VMT) is measured as the total miles of vehicular travel. For example, one vehicle traveling ten miles would equal 10 VMT. Four vehicles traveling ten miles would equal 40 VMT.

What are the elements of a VMT program?

The City of Petaluma is in contract with Fehr & Peers to guide the City through the transition from LOS to VMT. Fehr & Peers is developing recommendations to establish a Petaluma specific VMT program, which will contain the following elements:

Metrics: How VMT is presented and may include per capita, per household, per employee, or other measure.

Screening: Identifies project types or activities that will not be subject to a quantitative VMT analysis and which projects or activities will be required to conduct a quantitative VMT analysis. can be presumed not to cause a VMT impact.

Methods: Techniques and methodology used to calculate and forecast VMT.

Thresholds: Establish levels at which a project would contribute to a potentially significant environmental impact due to VMT.

Mitigation: Measures that a project can implement to avoid, reduce or offset potentially significant VMT impacts.

What will happen to Level of Service?

The City will decide how to treat the current level of service policy as part of the VMT Transition process. Options are to continue to include a LOS policy in the General Plan or to eliminate it all together. Under all circumstances LOS will no longer be used to assess environmental impacts.

Where is there more information on VMT?

The California Governor's Office of Planning and Research has an informational page on SB 743, which includes the Technical Advisory on Evaluating Transportation Impact, Problems with LOS, Benefits of VMT, among other resources: <http://opr.ca.gov/ceqa/updates/sb-743/>