

III. Transportation and related impacts

Oddly, the DEIR/EIS/EA has concluded that the project would not generate increases in daily trips or VMT¹⁰:

Because the project involves improvements to existing transportation infrastructure, no new daily trips are anticipated to occur as a result of implementation of the proposed project. Thus, the generation of new DVTE would not occur with project implementation and this topic is not discussed further in the EIR/EIS/EA. (p. 4.15-17) [Emphasis added]

...None of the alternatives, however, would generate traffic or result in increased regional traffic volumes traveling through the study area or elsewhere in the Region, because traffic volumes are determined by regional travel demand, local and regional land uses, and residential and visitor populations. For this reason, the action alternatives would not contribute to this cumulative condition, so no cumulative impact would occur. (p. 5-20) [Emphasis added]

Meanwhile, the DEIR/EIS/EA claims VMT ‘benefits’ from changes in the route.¹¹ However, without addressing the increased trips that will be induced and generated by the project, this analysis is fatally flawed.

The DEIR/EIS/EA also concludes that traffic flow will improve in the area,¹² which fails to account for the many studies showing that the reduction in congestion is temporary, and traffic eventually works its way back up to the previous levels of congestion. Further, impacts on intersection operations¹³ were not analyzed because of the same incorrect assertion (that the project will not increase trips).

¹⁰ **Impact 4.15-3. Vehicle miles of travel.** VMT is a measure of the efficiency of the transportation system and the degree to which the land use pattern would reduce personal motor vehicle travel. When VMT increases, it results in indirect environmental impacts (such as air pollutant emissions). VMT would decrease a small amount for Alternatives 1 through 4 as a result of the realignment of SR 89. For Alternatives 1, 2, 3, and 4, reduced VMT would result in a small beneficial impact. For Alternatives 5, 6, and 6a, the existing roadway alignment would remain the same; thus, no change to existing VMT would occur and there would be no impact. (DEIR/EIS/EA, p. 4.15-42)

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¹² **Impact 4.15-6. Mobility and operations-related impacts.**

A second bridge across the Truckee River would improve travel flow and efficiency for all transportation modes in the study area. Two river crossings that would spread the vehicular, pedestrian, and bicycle volumes across multiple locations would reduce congestion and the potential for conflict among travel modes. Implementation of Alternatives 1, 2, 3, and 4 would result in a beneficial impact. Because a second river crossing is not provided under Alternatives 5, 6, and 6a, there would be no impacts with these alternatives. (DEIR/EIS/EA p. 4.15-47)

¹³ **Impact 4.15-2. Intersection operations.** The project would not generate additional vehicle trips that could affect intersection operations; rather, it would implement improvements to existing transportation infrastructure. (DEIR/EIS/EA, p. 4.15-36)

Rather, evidence suggests that such projects will lead to increased trips through “induced travel” and “traffic generation.”¹⁴

A project that changes user travel costs (money or time) on a particular street, road, or transit route will motivate the following changes in traveler behavior:

- **Changes in route:** Users change their route from other facilities to an improved facility.
- **Changes in mode:** Users of other modes change their mode to take advantage of an improved facility.
- **Changes in time of travel:** Users change their time of travel to a more desired time due to the decrease in congestion.
- **Generation of new trips:** Users choose to make trips they previously would not have made, because travel costs are lower.

This is called *generated traffic*, referring to additional vehicle traffic on a particular road. This consists in part of *induced travel*, which refers to increased total vehicle miles travel (VMT) compared with what would otherwise occur (Litman 2001).

This additional vehicle travel tends to increase external costs (downstream congestion, parking subsidies, accident risk, pollution emissions) and provide additional user benefits, although these benefits tend to be small since it consists of the marginal-value vehicle travel that consumers most willingly forego when their time or vehicle operating costs increase slightly.

Virtually any roadway project that increases vehicle travel speeds or reduces travel costs can induce vehicle travel, including roadway expansion and traffic signal synchronization (Noland and Qudus 2006; TRISP 2005). On congested urban roadways with significant latent demand, a major portion of additional roadway capacity tends to be filled with generated traffic and induced travel within a few years (Gorham 2009). On the other hand, congestion pricing and improvements to alternative modes (such as high quality, grade-separated public transit that parallels a highway) can reduce traffic congestion without inducing additional vehicle travel. [Emphasis added]

Notably, “external costs” referenced in this report would be incurred by the West Shore. Further, reports by Caltrans’ own reviews document the need for Caltrans to understand that increasing capacity will induce travel:

“Induced demand fills up roads as fast as they’re built...”
- *Caltrans Research Connection, 2004*¹⁵

“...*Changing the culture.* Beyond the mission, vision, and goals, a modernized Caltrans will require capacities and skills that now are lacking: to understand and manage demand (including demand induced by new transportation facilities...” [Emphasis added]
- *Caltrans, Jan. 2014*¹⁶

¹⁴ <http://bca.transportationeconomics.org/benefits/induced-travel>; Also, “Induced demand fills up roads as fast as they’re built...” Caltrans Research Connection, 2004:
http://r.search.yahoo.com/_ylt=A0LEViWMma1UL.EAusgPxQt.;_ylu=X3oDMTBybnV2cXQwBHNIYwNzcgRwb3MDMgRjb2xvA2JmMQR2dGlkAw--/RV=2/RE=1420691980/RO=10/RU=http%3a%2f%2fwww.dot.ca.gov%2fresearchconn%2fpast_speakers%2fDrCrane%2fcrane_caltrans_9-04.ppt/RK=0/RS=xYABXn0UpTUZOiM3YY2jKqiA6kw;

¹⁵

http://r.search.yahoo.com/_ylt=A0LEViWMma1UL.EAusgPxQt.;_ylu=X3oDMTBybnV2cXQwBHNIYwNzcgRwb3MDMgRjb2xvA2JmMQR2dGlkAw--/RV=2/RE=1420691980/RO=10/RU=http%3a%2f%2fwww.dot.ca.gov%2fresearchconn%2fpast_speakers%2fDrCrane%2fcrane_caltrans_9-04.ppt/RK=0/RS=xYABXn0UpTUZOiM3YY2jKqiA6kw-

Numerous other studies and references support the concept of induced travel and generated traffic associated with increases in roadway capacity:

“The results strongly support the hypothesis that added lane mileage can induce significant additional travel.”
- *Noland, 2001*¹⁷

“When road capacity is increased, total travel time will ultimately equalize over time, until traffic moves at the previous levels of congestion.”
- *Campaign for Sensible Transportation*¹⁸

“Traffic congestion tends to maintain equilibrium. Congestion reaches a point at which it constrains further growth in peak-period trips. If road capacity increases, the number of peak-period trips also increases until congestion again limits further traffic growth. The additional travel is called “generated traffic.” Generated traffic consists of diverted traffic (trips shifted in time, route and destination), and induced vehicle travel (shifts from other modes, longer trips and new vehicle trips). Research indicates that generated traffic often fills a significant portion of capacity added to congested urban road...”
- *Littman, 2014*¹⁹

“The new alignment could change traffic patterns at the Tahoe City area. At the present time, many residents and visitors plan their trips to avoid the congestion associated with Fanny Bridge. If the traffic queues on SR 89 were reduced, then there would be more flexibility for making vehicle trips in the Tahoe City area during peak summer hours. It should be noted that some interests are opposed to any improvement to the conditions that exist on SR 89 because it could result in inducing additional vehicle trips to the Tahoe Basin... There is also the potential that any of the alternatives could result in cumulative impacts that are currently unknown. In addition, because the alternatives are intended to reduce the existing congestion at Fanny Bridge, there is a possibility that they could result in growth inducement. Further investigations of these issues is also warranted.”
- *Project Study Report, March 2002*

In fact, the TMPO’s own Regional Transportation Plan (2008)²⁰ estimated the increase in VMT and vehicle trips from this project (excerpt below). This conflicts with the claim in the current DEIR/EIS/EA that the project will not increase vehicle trips or VMT.

¹⁶ “The California Department of Transportation: SSTI Assessment and Recommendations: State Smart Transportation Initiative January 2014;
http://r.search.yahoo.com/_ylt=A0LEViWMma1UL.EAu8gPxQt.;_ylu=X3oDMTBvODJtaWUzBHNIYwNzcgRwb3MDMwRjb2xvA2JmMQR2dGlkAw--/RV=2/RE=1420691980/RO=10/RU=http%3a%2f%2fwww.calsta.ca.gov%2fres%2fdocs%2fpdfs%2f2013%2fSSTI_Independent%2520Caltrans%2520Review%25201.28.14.pdf/RK=0/RS=R_FtXKwCadcL.ktzpaiG6r9k3iM-

¹⁷ Robert. B. Nolan, 2001. *Relationships between highway capacity and induced vehicle travel.*

Transportation Research Part A 35 (2001) 47 - 72. <http://www.sensibletransportation.org/pdf/noland.pdf>

¹⁸ <http://www.sensibletransportation.org/induced/>

¹⁹ Todd Litman. “Generated Traffic and Induced Travel.” Implications for Transportation Planning. 2014. *Victoria Transport Policy Institute*;

http://r.search.yahoo.com/_ylt=A0LEViWMma1UL.EAx8gPxQt.;_ylu=X3oDMTBzajE3bzE3BHNIYwNzcgRwb3MDMTAEY29sbwNiZjEEdnRpZAM-/RV=2/RE=1420691980/RO=10/RU=http%3a%2f%2fvtpi.org%2fgentraf.pdf/RK=0/RS=qbrb4IiN5XiCl2oKmTgu5OIPmI-

²⁰ Aka “Mobility 2030 - Lake Tahoe's Regional Transportation Plan Update.” From:
<http://www.tahoempo.org/rtp.aspx?SelectedIndex=1>