
SECTION 6: OTHER CEQA CONSIDERATIONS

6.1 - Significant Unavoidable Adverse Environmental Impacts

According to CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.2(b), an EIR must disclose the significant unavoidable impacts that will result from a project. Moreover, these guidelines state that an EIR should explain the implications of such impacts and the reasons why the project is being proposed, notwithstanding such impacts. Implementation of the Wasco Center Walmart will result in the alteration of the physical environment. Section 4, Project and Cumulative Impacts, of this ~~Draft~~ Final SEIR provides a discussion of the potential environmental impacts of the proposed project, as well as measures to reduce the environmental impacts to the maximum extent feasible. After implementation of the Wasco Center Walmart and the project related mitigation measures, traffic impacts could remain significant and unavoidable.

As described in Section 4.9 in this ~~Draft~~ Final SEIR, the proposed project would result in significant adverse traffic impacts along State Route (SR-46) and improvements are proposed to reduce potential intersection impacts to less than significant. Changes or improvements along SR-46 to improve the operations of intersections are not under the jurisdiction of the City of Wasco. Rather, these improvements would be under the jurisdiction of California Department of Transportation (Caltrans). Although the proposed mitigation measures will reduce potential traffic impacts to less than significant, conservatively, these potential traffic impacts are considered significant and unavoidable because the City of Wasco does not have jurisdiction over the proposed traffic improvements along SR-46. Therefore, the project will require a Statement of Overriding Considerations.

6.2 - Growth Inducing Impacts

This section evaluates the potential for the Wasco Center Walmart to affect “economic or population growth, or the construction of additional housing, either directly or indirectly, in the surrounding environment” (CEQA Guidelines, 15126.2[d]).

There are two types of growth inducing impacts a project may have, direct and indirect. To assess the potential for growth-inducing impacts, the project characteristics that may encourage and facilitate activities that individually or cumulatively may affect the environment must be evaluated.

Direct growth-inducing impacts occur when the development of a project imposes new burdens on a community that directly induces population growth or the construction of additional developments in the same area of the proposed project, thereby triggering related growth-associated impacts. Included in this analysis are projects that would remove physical obstacles to population growth (such as a new road into an undeveloped area or a wastewater treatment plant that could allow more construction in the service area). Construction of these types of infrastructure projects cannot be considered isolated from the development they trigger. In contrast, projects that physically remove obstacles to growth

and projects that indirectly induce growth are those which may provide a catalyst for future unrelated development in an area (such as a new residential community that requires additional commercial uses to support residents).

Implementation of the proposed project will result in growth inducement indirectly through the construction of project area circulation and the proposed Wasco Center Walmart. However, the Wasco General Plan encourages the orderly outward expansion of new urban development that maintains the continuity of existing development and allows incremental expansion of infrastructure and public services. The project does not introduce any new offsite arterials, collectors, or interchanges not already outlined in the General Plan. The project does not introduce new public service facilities not already outlined in the General Plan and potable water will be supplied by the groundwater basin below the site via existing water wells. Thus, the project is not introducing any new facilitation to growth inducement not already envisioned to be needed to accommodate planned future growth. Hence, while it is recognized that the project will induce growth in the project area, such growth is in concurrence with the City's planned growth policies.

6.3 - Significant Irreversible Environmental Changes

The environmental effects associated with the development of the Wasco Center Walmart project are summarized in Table ES-1 and in Section 4, Project and Cumulative Impacts, of this document. Implementation of the proposed project will require a long-term commitment of land as discussed below. More specifically the primary effect of development under the proposed project would be the commitment of approximately 17 acres of farmland to non-agricultural uses. The financial and material investments that would be required of the applicant and the City would result in further commitments of land resources making it unlikely that the same or similar uses would continue in the future. Implementation of the proposed project represents a long-term commitment to urbanization.

Environmental changes associated with the implementation of the proposed project result in alterations of the physical environment. In order to develop the proposed project, existing farmland would be irrevocably committed to non-agricultural uses. If the proposed project is approved, and subsequently implemented, new structures would be built, additional utilities would be constructed, and circulation improvements would be made. Nonrenewable resources would be committed, primarily in the form of fossil fuels, and would include fuel oil, natural gas, and gasoline used by vehicles and equipment associated with the construction of the Wasco Center Walmart project. The consumption of other nonrenewable or slowly renewable resources would result from development of the proposed project. These resources would include, but not be limited to, lumber and other forest products, sand and gravel, asphalt, petrochemical construction materials, steel, copper, lead, and water. Because alternative energy sources such as solar or wind energy are not currently in widespread local use, it is unlikely that a real savings in nonrenewable energy supplies (i.e., oil and gas) could be realized in the immediate future.