

## SECTION 3: ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

### 3.1 - Project Environmental Setting

The site of the proposed project is located within the incorporated limits of the City of Wasco approximately 8 miles west of State Route (SR) 99 on SR-46 (Paso Robles Highway) in north-central Kern County. East-west regional access to both the City of Wasco and project vicinity is from SR-46, while SR-99 provides regional access from the north and south. The primary local access to the project site is from Paso Robles Highway, which borders the project on the south side. The proposed Walmart site is located on approximately 17 acres adjacent to and west of future Central Avenue and immediately south of future Margalo Street. The site can be found in the US Geological Survey (USGS) 7.5-minute Wasco topographic quadrangle map T. 27 S., R. 24 E., Section 2.

The project site comprises approximately 17 acres of the 112-acre Wasco Center and is zoned Commercial Retail (C-R) and has a general plan land use designation of “Community Retail Commercial.” The 17-acre site is located on the west side of Central Avenue, has relatively flat terrain, and contains walnut orchards. The area surrounding the 17-acre site contains fallow agricultural land to the north, walnut orchards to the west, south, and east. In addition, southeast of the site is a commercial center with a K-mart, Los Cazadores (restaurant), and Rite Aid.

The approved and not yet constructed Wasco Center contains 98.6 acres of commercial retail that includes 273,000 sq ft of large box retail, 105,000 sq ft of shopping center, 75,000 sq ft of movie theater, 67,500 sq ft of restaurants, 206,000 sq ft of community retail, 11,900 sq ft of recreation, and 100-room hotel. The Wasco Center also includes 14 acres approved for 123 units of high density residential directly across from the project site on the east side of Central Avenue.

From a geophysical perspective, the project site is located in western Kern County and is surrounded by relatively flat terrain. The project site is located in the southwestern end of the San Joaquin Valley.

From a biological perspective, the project site has been heavily disturbed as a result of previous land modifications associated with agricultural activities. No undisturbed native habitat or grassland exists on the site. The plant community on the project site is non-native grassland and walnut orchards.

With respect to air quality, the project site is located within the San Joaquin Valley Air Basin, which is in nonattainment for ozone, PM<sub>10</sub>, and PM<sub>2.5</sub>. The notable source of air pollutant emissions in proximity to the project site includes vehicular traffic on SR-46.

The existing noise setting at the project site is influenced by roadway noise along SR-46, which is located south of the project site.

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## 3.2 - Cumulative Environmental Setting

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### 3.2.1 - CEQA Requirements

Section 15130 of the CEQA Guidelines requires that the EIR discuss cumulative impacts of a project when the incremental effects of a project are cumulatively considerable. Cumulative impacts are defined as impacts that are created as a result of the combination of the project evaluated in the EIR together with other projects causing related impacts. Cumulatively considerable means that the incremental effects of an individual project are considerable when viewed in connection with the effects of past projects, other current projects, and probable future projects. According to the CEQA Guidelines, elements considered necessary to provide an adequate discussion of cumulative impacts of a project include either: (1) a list of past, present, and probable future projects producing related or cumulative impacts; or (2) a summary of projections contained in an adopted General Plan or related planning document which is designed to evaluate regional or area-wide conditions.

The cumulative impact analysis for the proposed project includes a list of currently approved but not yet developed projects as well as a future growth rate that is projected by Caltrans for the Wasco area. This projected growth rate is based on the Wasco area rate of growth average over the past 10 years. A detailed discussion of the growth rate is provided below.

The currently approved, but not yet developed, projects include the Wasco Center and the Red Roof Inn. The Wasco Center includes 98.6 acres of commercial retail that includes 273,000 sq ft of large box retail, 105,000 sq ft of shopping center, 75,000 sq ft of movie theater, 67,500 sq ft of restaurants, 206,000 sq ft of community retail, 11,900 sq ft of recreation, and 100-room hotel. The Wasco Center also includes 14 acres approved for 123 units of high density residential directly across from the project site on the east side of Central Avenue. The Red Roof Inn includes 85 rooms within 79,800 sq ft and is located on the north side of SR-46, east of Palm Avenue. According to the City of Wasco Community Development staff, no other projects are currently proposed within the city.

The future growth rate through 2035 is projected to be 1.5 percent in the Wasco area based on traffic volume data collected over the past decade. Based on information provided to the traffic specialist, Psomas, from Caltrans, the Wasco area has grown at approximately three percent per year on average over the last 10 years. To provide an average three percent growth rate per year through the year 2035, it was determined that a 1.5 percent ambient growth rate should be applied. The ambient growth rate at 1.5 percent plus the traffic volumes projected to be generated by the approved Wasco Center and the proposed Walmart will result in a three percent per year growth rate over the next 25 years to match the historic trend. Therefore, with consent from Caltrans, the City determined that a 1.5 percent per year growth rate was used to calculate the ambient growth rate for the time periods between the year 2010 and the year 2013 as well as between the year 2013 and the year 2035.

Discussion of the cumulative impact analysis contained within this ~~Draft~~ [Final](#) SEIR is set forth below.

### **3.2.2 - Setting**

#### **Aesthetics**

The cumulative analysis for aesthetics, with regard to light and glare, is based on the light and glare contribution of the remainder of the approved Wasco Center and the Red Roof Inn, in addition to the proposed Walmart.

#### **Air Quality**

The cumulative analysis for air quality includes multiple cumulative study areas. These include local evaluations for criteria pollutant and diesel emission concentrations that may cause health effects or odor impacts. The local study area utilized the cumulative traffic volumes generated from the traffic analysis. In addition, an 11-mile radius from the project site represents a cumulative study area for hazardous air pollutant concentrations from stationary sources. The regional evaluations for criteria pollutants used the San Joaquin Air Basin (SJVAB) as the cumulative study area to determine cumulative effects of total criteria pollutants within the entire SJVAB.

#### **Biological Resources**

The cumulative analysis for biological resources is based on the future development of the approved Wasco Center and the Red Roof Inn, in addition to the proposed Walmart.

#### **Greenhouse Gas Emissions**

The cumulative analysis for greenhouse gas emissions is based on emissions that would occur within California.

#### **Hazards and Hazardous Materials**

The cumulative analysis for hazards and hazardous materials is based on the future development of the approved Wasco Center and the Red Roof Inn, in addition to the proposed Walmart, for release of hazardous materials within the city.

#### **Hydrology and Water Quality**

The cumulative analysis for hydrology and water quality is based on a study area that is west of the future alignment of Central Avenue because stormwater flow will be primarily conveyed to the onsite underground retention basin for Wasco Center. Since stormwater flow from the project site is not conveyed beyond the retention basin, the cumulative study area includes the areas that provide stormwater flow to the retention basin that serve the proposed Walmart.

#### **Noise**

The cumulative analysis for noise is based on a 1.5 percent growth rate that was determined using data of traffic volumes collected over the past decade. Furthermore, taken into consideration are also the approved Wasco Center and Red Roof Inn, in addition to the proposed Walmart.

## **Public Services**

### ***Fire Services***

The principal fire station that would serve the project site would be Station No. Station 31, located at 2424 7th Street, approximately one-half mile from the project site. Fire station service areas are determined by the station's by their ability to meet a six-minute response time. Station No. 31's service area includes the entire City of Wasco.

### ***Police Services***

The cumulative impact analysis is based on the Kern County Sheriff's Department's Wasco Substation's service area. This station, located at 748 F Street, serves the entire City of Wasco.

## **Transportation/Traffic**

The cumulative analysis for transportation and traffic is also based on the 1.5 percent growth rate as discussed above under noise. Furthermore, taken into consideration are also the approved Wasco Center and Red Roof Inn, in addition to the proposed Walmart. The cumulative analysis within the transportation and traffic section also compares existing without Walmart traffic volumes to 2013 and 2035 with Walmart traffic volumes. These two analyses identify whether the addition of cumulative with Walmart traffic volumes will result in traffic impacts.

## **Urban Decay**

The cumulative analysis for the urban decay analysis is based on the market area for the Wasco Walmart. The trade area for the proposed Walmart has been defined as a customized polygon based on existing transportation corridors and concentrations of population and commercial development. The trade area includes the incorporated cities of Wasco, Shafter, and McFarland, in addition to neighboring unincorporated portions of the County. The boundaries of the trade area polygon are Elmo Highway to the north, SR-65/Porterville Highway to the east, Burbank Street to the south, and U.S. Interstate Highway 5 to the west. The market areas encompass an area from which demand for the proposed retail projects originate and areas within which retail projects are competitive with each other.