



# South Coast Air Quality Management District

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**Notice of Preparation of a Draft Environmental Impact Report for  
Nichols Ranch Specific Plan  
(Planning Application No. 2017-29 and Specific Plan No. 2018-01)<sup>1</sup>**

The South Coast Air Quality Management District (SCAQMD) staff appreciates the opportunity to comment on the above-mentioned document. SCAQMD staff's comments are recommendations regarding the analysis of potential air quality impacts from the Proposed Project that should be included in the Draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR). Please send SCAQMD a copy of the Draft EIR upon its completion. Note that copies of the Draft EIR that are submitted to the State Clearinghouse are not forwarded to SCAQMD. Please forward a copy of the Draft EIR directly to SCAQMD at the address shown in the letterhead. **In addition, please send with the Draft EIR all appendices or technical documents related to the air quality, health risk, and greenhouse gas analyses and electronic versions of all air quality modeling and health risk assessment files<sup>2</sup>. These include emission calculation spreadsheets and modeling input and output files (not PDF files). Without all files and supporting documentation, SCAQMD staff will be unable to complete our review of the air quality analyses in a timely manner. Any delays in providing all supporting documentation will require additional time for review beyond the end of the comment period.**

### **Air Quality Analysis**

SCAQMD adopted its California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Air Quality Handbook in 1993 to assist other public agencies with the preparation of air quality analyses. SCAQMD recommends that the Lead Agency use this Handbook as guidance when preparing its air quality analysis. Copies of the Handbook are available from SCAQMD's Subscription Services Department by calling (909) 396-3720. More guidance developed since this Handbook is also available on SCAQMD's website at: [http://www.aqmd.gov/home/regulations/ceqa/air-quality-analysis-handbook/ceqa-air-quality-handbook-\(1993\)](http://www.aqmd.gov/home/regulations/ceqa/air-quality-analysis-handbook/ceqa-air-quality-handbook-(1993)). SCAQMD staff also recommends that the Lead Agency use the CalEEMod land use emissions software. This software has recently been updated to incorporate up-to-date state and locally approved emission factors and methodologies for estimating pollutant emissions from typical land use development. CalEEMod is the only software model maintained by the California Air Pollution Control Officers Association (CAPCOA) and replaces the now outdated URBEMIS. This model is available free of charge at: [www.caleemod.com](http://www.caleemod.com).

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<sup>1</sup> The Lead Agency proposes to build, among other things, a total of 168 residential units on 72.5 acres.

<sup>2</sup> Pursuant to the CEQA Guidelines Section 15174, the information contained in an EIR shall include summarized technical data, maps, plot plans, diagrams, and similar relevant information sufficient to permit full assessment of significant environmental impacts by reviewing agencies and members of the public. Placement of highly technical and specialized analysis and data in the body of an EIR should be avoided through inclusion of supporting information and analyses as appendices to the main body of the EIR. Appendices to the EIR may be prepared in volumes separate from the basic EIR document, but shall be readily available for public examination and shall be submitted to all clearinghouses which assist in public review.

SCAQMD has also developed both regional and localized significance thresholds. SCAQMD staff requests that the Lead Agency quantify criteria pollutant emissions and compare the results to SCAQMD's CEQA regional pollutant emissions significance thresholds to determine air quality impacts. SCAQMD's CEQA regional pollutant emissions significance thresholds can be found here: <http://www.aqmd.gov/docs/default-source/ceqa/handbook/scaqmd-air-quality-significance-thresholds.pdf>. In addition to analyzing regional air quality impacts, SCAQMD staff recommends calculating localized air quality impacts and comparing the results to localized significance thresholds (LSTs). LSTs can be used in addition to the recommended regional significance thresholds as a second indication of air quality impacts when preparing a CEQA document. Therefore, when preparing the air quality analysis for the Proposed Project, it is recommended that the Lead Agency perform a localized analysis by either using the LSTs developed by SCAQMD staff or performing dispersion modeling as necessary. Guidance for performing a localized air quality analysis can be found at: <http://www.aqmd.gov/home/regulations/ceqa/air-quality-analysis-handbook/localized-significance-thresholds>.

The Lead Agency should identify any potential adverse air quality impacts that could occur from all phases of the Proposed Project and all air pollutant sources related to the Proposed Project. Air quality impacts from both construction (including demolition, if any) and operations should be calculated. Construction-related air quality impacts typically include, but are not limited to, emissions from the use of heavy-duty equipment from grading, earth-loading/unloading, paving, architectural coatings, off-road mobile sources (e.g., heavy-duty construction equipment) and on-road mobile sources (e.g., construction worker vehicle trips, material transport trips). Operation-related air quality impacts may include, but are not limited to, emissions from stationary sources (e.g., boilers), area sources (e.g., solvents and coatings), and vehicular trips (e.g., on- and off-road tailpipe emissions and entrained dust). Air quality impacts from indirect sources, such as sources that generate or attract vehicular trips, should be included in the analysis.

#### Mobile Source Health Risk Assessment

Notwithstanding the court rulings, SCAQMD staff recognizes that the Lead Agencies that approve CEQA documents retain the authority to include any additional information they deem relevant to assessing and mitigating the environmental impacts of a project. Because of SCAQMD staff's concern about the potential public health impacts of siting sensitive populations within close proximity of freeways, SCAQMD staff recommends that, prior to approving the project, Lead Agencies consider the impacts of air pollutants on people who will live in a new project and provide mitigation where necessary.

When specific development is reasonably foreseeable as result of the goals, policies, and guidelines in the Proposed Project, the Lead Agency should identify any potential adverse health risk impacts using its best efforts to find out and a good-faith effort at full disclosure in the CEQA document. Based on a review of Figure 2-4, *Aerial Photograph*, in the Initial Study/Notice of Preparation, SCAQMD staff found that the Proposed Project will be located in a close proximity to Interstate 15 (I-15) Freeway. Because of the close proximity to the existing freeway, residents at the Proposed Project would be exposed to diesel particulate matter (DPM). Diesel particulate matter emitted from diesel powered engines (such as trucks) has been classified by the state as a toxic air contaminant and a carcinogen. Since future residences of the Proposed Project would be exposed to toxic emissions from the nearby sources of air pollution (e.g., diesel fueled highway vehicles), SCAQMD staff recommends that the Lead Agency conduct a health risk

assessment (HRA)<sup>3</sup> to disclose the potential health risks to the residents from the emissions coming from vehicles traveling on the I-15 Freeway<sup>4</sup>.

#### Health Risk Assessment for Gasoline Dispensing Stations

The Proposed Project would include, among other things, a gasoline dispensing station with 16 fueling pumps. Additionally, based on a review of aerial photographs, SCAQMD staff found that the Proposed Project is located in a close proximity west of Temescal Canyon High School. Since operation of a gasoline station will emit air toxics, a HRA analysis is required as part of the SCAQMD permitting requirements for gas stations. Any assumptions used in the HRA analysis in the EIR will be used as the basis for permit conditions and limits. Therefore, it is recommended that the Lead Agency evaluate, quantify, and perform a gasoline dispensing station HRA<sup>5</sup> for the Proposed Project in the Draft EIR. Guidance for performing this HRA can be found in the SCAQMD's *Emission Inventory and Risk Assessment Guidelines for Gasoline Dispensing Stations*<sup>6</sup>.

#### Guidance Regarding Residences Sited Near a High-Volume Freeway or Other Sources of Air Pollution

SCAQMD staff recognizes that there are many factors Lead Agencies must consider when making local planning and land use decisions. To facilitate stronger collaboration between Lead Agencies and the SCAQMD to reduce community exposure to source-specific and cumulative air pollution impacts, the SCAQMD adopted the Guidance Document for Addressing Air Quality Issues in General Plans and Local Planning in 2005. This Guidance Document provides suggested policies that local governments can use in their General Plans or through local planning to prevent or reduce potential air pollution impacts and protect public health. SCAQMD staff recommends that the Lead Agency review this Guidance Document as a tool when making local planning and land use decisions. This Guidance Document is available on SCAQMD's website at: <http://www.aqmd.gov/docs/default-source/planning/air-quality-guidance/complete-guidance-document.pdf>. Additional guidance on siting incompatible land uses (such as placing homes near freeways or other polluting sources) can be found in the California Air Resources Board's (CARB) *Air Quality and Land Use Handbook: A Community Health Perspective*, which can be found at: <http://www.arb.ca.gov/ch/handbook.pdf>. Guidance<sup>7</sup> on strategies to reduce air pollution exposure near high-volume roadways can be found at: [https://www.arb.ca.gov/ch/rd\\_technical\\_advisory\\_final.PDF](https://www.arb.ca.gov/ch/rd_technical_advisory_final.PDF).

#### Mitigation Measures

In the event that the Proposed Project generates significant adverse air quality impacts, CEQA requires that all feasible mitigation measures that go beyond what is required by law be utilized during project construction and operation to minimize these impacts. Pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.4 (a)(1)(D), any impacts resulting from mitigation measures must also be discussed. Several resources are

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<sup>3</sup> "Health Risk Assessment Guidance for Analyzing Cancer Risk from Mobile Source Diesel Idling Emissions for CEQA Air Quality Analysis," accessed at: <http://www.aqmd.gov/home/regulations/ceqa/air-quality-analysis-handbook/mobile-source-toxics-analysis>.

<sup>4</sup> SCAQMD has developed the CEQA significance threshold of 10 in one million for cancer risk. When SCAQMD acts as the Lead Agency, SCAQMD staff conducts a HRA, compares the maximum cancer risk to the threshold of 10 in one million to determine the level of significance for health risk impacts, and identifies mitigation measures if the risk is found to be significant.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.* Health risks from operating a gasoline service station must be demonstrated to be below 10 in one million before a permit can be issued.

<sup>6</sup> South Coast Air Quality Management District. *Emission Inventory and Risk Assessment Guidelines for Gasoline Dispensing Stations*. Accessed at: <http://www.aqmd.gov/home/permits/risk-assessment>.

<sup>7</sup> In April 2017, CARB published a technical advisory, *Strategies to Reduce Air Pollution Exposure Near High-Volume Roadways: Technical Advisory*, to supplement CARB's *Air Quality and Land Use Handbook: A Community Health Perspective*. This technical advisory is intended to provide information on strategies to reduce exposures to traffic emissions near high-volume roadways to assist land use planning and decision-making in order to protect public health and promote equity and environmental justice. The technical advisory is available at: <https://www.arb.ca.gov/ch/landuse.htm>.

available to assist the Lead Agency with identifying potential mitigation measures for the Proposed Project, including:

- Chapter 11 of SCAQMD's CEQA Air Quality Handbook
- SCAQMD's CEQA web pages available here: <http://www.aqmd.gov/home/regulations/ceqa/air-quality-analysis-handbook/mitigation-measures-and-control-efficiencies>
- SCAQMD's Rule 403 – Fugitive Dust, and the Implementation Handbook for controlling construction-related emissions and Rule 1403 – Asbestos Emissions from Demolition/Renovation Activities
- SCAQMD's Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Plan (MMRP) for the 2016 Air Quality Management Plan (2016 AQMP) available here (starting on page 86): <http://www.aqmd.gov/docs/default-source/Agendas/Governing-Board/2017/2017-mar3-035.pdf>
- CAPCOA's *Quantifying Greenhouse Gas Mitigation Measures* available here: <http://www.capcoa.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/11/CAPCOA-Quantification-Report-9-14-Final.pdf>

As stated above, the Proposed Project is located in proximity to the I-15 Freeway. Many strategies are available to reduce exposure, including, but are not limited to, building filtration systems with MERV 13 or better, or in some cases, MERV 15 or better is recommended; building design, orientation, location; vegetation barriers or landscaping screening, etc. Because of the potential adverse health risks involved with siting sensitive receptors near freeways, it is essential that any proposed strategy must be carefully evaluated before implementation.

In the event that enhanced filtration units are installed at the Proposed Project either as a mitigation measure or project design feature requirement, SCAQMD staff recommends that the Lead Agency consider the limitations of the enhanced filtration. For example, in a study that SCAQMD conducted to investigate filters<sup>8</sup>, a cost burden is expected to be within the range of \$120 to \$240 per year to replace each filter. In addition, because the filters would not have any effectiveness unless the HVAC system is running, there may be increased energy costs to the residents. It is typically assumed that the filters operate 100 percent of the time while residents are indoors, and the environmental analysis does not generally account for the times when the residents have their windows or doors open or are in common space areas of the project. In addition, these filters have no ability to filter out any toxic gases from vehicle exhaust. . Therefore, the presumed effectiveness and feasibility of any filtration units should be carefully evaluated in more detail prior to assuming that they will sufficiently alleviate exposures to DPM emissions.

If enhanced filtration units are installed at the Proposed Project, and to ensure that they are enforceable throughout the lifetime of the Proposed Project as well as effective in reducing exposures to DPM emissions, SCAQMD staff recommends that the Lead Agency provide additional details regarding the ongoing, regular maintenance of filters in the Draft EIR. To facilitate a good faith effort at full disclosure and provide useful information to future residents who will live at the Proposed Project, the Draft EIR should include the following information, at a minimum:

- Disclose the potential health impacts to prospective residents from living in a close proximity of I-15 and the reduced effectiveness of air filtration system when windows are open and/or when residents are outdoor (e.g., in the common usable open space areas);

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<sup>8</sup> This study evaluated filters rated MERV 13 or better. Accessed at: <http://www.aqmd.gov/docs/default-source/ceqa/handbook/aqmdpilotstudyfinalreport.pdf>. Also see 2012 Peer Review Journal article by SCAQMD: <http://d7.iqair.com/sites/default/files/pdf/Polidori-et-al-2012.pdf>.

- Identify the responsible implementing and enforcement agency such as the Lead Agency to ensure that enhanced filtration units are installed on-site at the Proposed Project before a permit of occupancy is issued;
- Identify the responsible implementing and enforcement agency such as the Lead Agency to ensure that enhanced filtration units are inspected regularly;
- Provide information to residents on where the MERV filters can be purchased;
- Disclose the potential increase in energy costs for running the HVAC system to prospective residents;
- Provide recommended schedules (e.g., once a year or every six months) for replacing the enhanced filtration units to prospective residents;
- Identify the responsible entity such as residents themselves, Homeowner's Association, or property management for ensuring enhanced filtration units are replaced on time, if appropriate and feasible (if residents should be responsible for the periodic and regular purchase and replacement of the enhanced filtration units, the Lead Agency should include this information in the disclosure form);
- Identify, provide, and disclose any ongoing cost sharing strategies, if any, for the purchase and replacement of the enhanced filtration units;
- Set City-wide or Project-specific criteria for assessing progress in installing and replacing the enhanced filtration units; and
- Develop a City-wide or Project-specific process for evaluating the effectiveness of the enhanced filtration units at the Proposed Project.

### **Alternatives**

In the event that the Proposed Project generates significant adverse air quality impacts, CEQA requires the consideration and discussion of alternatives to the project or its location which are capable of avoiding or substantially lessening any of the significant effects of the project. The discussion of a reasonable range of potentially feasible alternatives, including a "no project" alternative, is intended to foster informed decision-making and public participation. Pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.6(d), the Draft EIR shall include sufficient information about each alternative to allow meaningful evaluation, analysis, and comparison with the Proposed Project.

### **Permits and SCAQMD Rules**

As stated above, the Proposed Project would include, among other things, a gasoline service station with 16 fueling pumps on 72.5 acres. Operation of a gasoline service station requires a permit from SCAQMD. SCAQMD should be identified as a Responsible Agency for the Proposed Project in the Draft EIR. The assumptions in the air quality analysis in the EIR will be the basis for permit conditions and limits. For more information on permits, please visit SCAQMD's webpage at: <http://www.aqmd.gov/home/permits>. Permitting questions can be directed to SCAQMD Engineering and Permitting staff at (909) 396-3385.

The Draft EIR should also discuss how the Proposed Project will comply with applicable SCAQMD Rules, including, but may not be limited to, Rule 201 – Permit to Construct, Rule 203 – Permit to Operate, and Rule 461 – Gasoline Transfer and Dispensing.

### **Data Sources**

SCAQMD rules and relevant air quality reports and data are available by calling SCAQMD's Public Information Center at (909) 396-2039. Much of the information available through the Public Information Center is also available at SCAQMD's webpage at: <http://www.aqmd.gov>.

SCAQMD staff is available to work with the Lead Agency to ensure that project air quality impacts are accurately evaluated and any significant impacts are mitigated where feasible. If you have any questions regarding this letter, please contact me at [lsun@aqmd.gov](mailto:lsun@aqmd.gov) or call me at (909) 396-3308.

Sincerely,



Lijin Sun, J.D.

Program Supervisor, CEQA IGR

Planning, Rule Development & Area Sources

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