

4.23 SIGNIFICANT IRREVERSIBLE ENVIRONMENTAL CHANGES

This section of the Draft PEIR evaluates whether the DNA project would result in the irretrievable commitments of resources, or would cause irreversible changes in the environment.

4.23.1 Regulatory Context

The CEQA Guidelines (Section 15126.2[c]) require an evaluation of the significant irreversible environmental changes that would be caused by a project if implemented. In general, the CEQA Guidelines refer to the need to evaluate and justify the consumption of nonrenewable resources and the extent to which the project commits future generations to similar uses of nonrenewable resources. Use of nonrenewable resources during the initial and continued phases of the project may be irreversible if a large commitment of such resources makes removal or nonuse thereafter unlikely and generally commits future generations to similar uses. Determining whether the project may result in significant irreversible effects requires a determination of whether key resources would be degraded or destroyed, such that there is a small possibility of restoring them.

4.23.2 DNA Project Impacts

The DNA project would require approximately \$785.30 million in 2006 dollars to construct, including trackwork, stations, ROW, vehicles, final engineering, construction management, and project reserve.

Up to 1.8 acres of parkland would be dedicated as permanent transit right-of-way. Wetland resources could be adversely affected by alterations to wetland vegetation as a result of the new American River crossing structure (e.g., shading or on-going vegetation clearance requirements). Construction of the crossing would result in the long-term loss of approximately 1.75-acres of riparian habitat in the American River Parkway. Temporary and permanent wetland impacts associated with the river crossing range from 0.619 to 1.948 acres. Permanent displacement of approximately 200 square feet (0.005-acre) of waters of the U.S. would occur due to installation of the bridge piers in the active river channel. Compensation measures to be specified in consultation with the resource agencies will ensure no net loss of wetlands and minimize harm to any sensitive species potentially in the area.

Because the DNA project would reduce vehicle miles of travel within the region when compared to the No-Project Alternative, it would reduce the level of fossil fuel consumption by motor vehicles. Operation and maintenance of the light rail transit service would require the use of electricity for power. However, annual energy savings from reduced auto travel under the DNA project would more than offset its additional energy requirements.