

San Diego County's Reinstating Section 15183 Exemption for General Plan Projects is Cause for Celebration

Daily Journal
07.15.2024

On July 5, 2024, San Diego County announced it will reinstate applicants' ability to use the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines Section 15183 to streamline review of general plan-consistent projects under its general plan environmental impact report, notwithstanding the shift in transportation analysis under CEQA from level of service (LOS) to vehicle miles traveled (VMT).

As the County's announcement states, "projects deemed consistent with the County's General Plan and zoning (by means of an LOS comparison study) may now proceed under the 15183-exemption process with no additional VMT analysis, including projects located outside VMT Efficient or Infill Areas." The process requires an intensive technical analysis of the project's consistency with the General Plan and any and all "peculiar" impacts not adequately analyzed therein. But, VMT impacts no longer preclude use of the Section 15183 process, nor will projects using Section 15183 be required to mitigate their VMT impacts (to the detriment of affordability goals) or seek override where mitigation is infeasible.

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