

4.13 PUBLIC SERVICES

This section addresses the potential physical impacts on the environment that would be produced by the proposed project's increased demand on the providers of public services resulting in the construction of new or altered public facilities. This section analyzes the impacts of the proposed project on fire protection, police protection, schools, and other public services.

4.13.1 Existing Setting

The proposed project would include the construction of an approximately 229,000-square foot supercenter, a 6-pump gas station, and an approximately 4,000-square foot fast-food restaurant on property that is undeveloped. Public services that would serve the proposed project include fire protection and prevention services, police protection services, schools, parks, and other public facilities.

Fire protection and prevention services in the Town of Yucca Valley are contracted to the San Bernardino County Fire Department (SBCFD). The fire station nearest to the project site is Station 121, located at 57201 Twentynine Palms Highway in Yucca Valley, approximately 2.8 miles southeast of the project site. This station houses a single Type I engine company, one Type III engine, two paramedic ambulances, and one water tender. Station 121 is staffed by career firefighters working the traditional 56-hour work week.

Police protection service in the Town is provided by the San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department (SBCSD). The SBCSD operates from the Yucca Valley Police Department located at 6527 Whitefeather Road in Joshua Tree, approximately 6.5 miles east of the project site. The local force is staffed by one captain, one lieutenant, two sergeants, one detective, ten patrol officers, one juvenile officer, a service specialist, and two station clerks.

School services and facilities in the Town are provided by the Morongo Unified School District (District). The District consists of 17 schools and covers an area of more than 1,350 square miles in the desert region of southern California. Six schools within the District are located in the Town of Yucca Valley. Schools within the District which serve the Town of Yucca Valley include three elementary schools, one junior high school, one high school, and one alternative high school. Enrollment during the 2004-2005 school year totaled 9,647 students.¹ The District has stated that, although it has a set amount of space in permanent buildings, it does not have a set capacity because it has the ability to accommodate excess students in various ways, such as bringing in additional modular classrooms.²

The existing setting related to Park Services is contained in Section 4.14, Parks and Recreation.

¹ Morongo Unified School District website, School Accountability Reports, http://www.morongo.k12.ca.us/sarc_02/index.html, site accessed June 6, 2006.

² Telephone conversation with Judy Lassoan, Administrative Assistant in Maintenance and Operations, Morongo Unified School District, August 25, 2004.

4.13.2 Existing Policies and Regulations

Local Regulations

Town of Yucca Valley Comprehensive General Plan Policies. The Fire and Police Protection Element of the General Plan defines goals and policies related to public services. The specific policies of this General Plan that are relevant to the proposed project are as follows:

- Policy 3** Coordinate with the San Bernardino County Fire Department to enforce fire standards and regulations in the course of reviewing project design and building plans, and coordinating building inspections.
- Policy 6** The Police and Fire Departments, in their review of new development proposals, will be encouraged to evaluate development plans and comment on their ability to provide proper protection. This will include, but is not limited to, internal circulation systems, project directories, and street names and numbering systems.
- Policy 7** Utilize crime prevention principles through the integration of project planning which results in “defensible space” or high security designs as a means of providing increased security in residential, commercial, and industrial development.

4.13.3 Thresholds of Significance

The proposed project, according to Appendix G in the *CEQA Guidelines*, would result in a significant impact if it would cause any of the following:

Result in substantial adverse physical impacts associated with the provision of new or physically altered governmental facilities, need for new or physically altered governmental facilities, the construction of which could cause significant environmental impacts, in order to maintain acceptable service ratios, response times or other performance objectives for any of the public services:

- Fire protection;
- Police protection;
- Schools;
- Parks; and/or
- Other public facilities.

Analysis of project impacts on the need for new or altered parks is provided in Section 4.14, Parks and Recreation.

4.13.4 Impacts and Mitigation

Less Than Significant Impact

The following impacts were determined to be less than significant. In each of the following issues, either no impact or a less than significant impact would occur (and, therefore, no mitigation would be

required) or adherence to established regulations, standards, and policies would reduce potential impacts to a less than significant level.

Schools

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| Threshold | Would the proposed project result in substantial adverse physical impacts associated with the provision of new or physically altered governmental facilities, the construction of which could cause significant environmental impact, in order to maintain acceptable service ratios, response times, or other performance objectives for schools? |
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School districts are placed into a specific “level” based on school impact fee amounts that are imposed on the development. Senate Bill 50 (SB 50) establishes the base amount of allowable developer fees at \$1.93 per square foot for residential construction and \$0.31 per square foot for commercial (Government Code § 65995(b)). These base amounts are commonly called “Level 1 fees” and are the same caps that were in place at the time SB 50 was enacted. Level 1 fees are subject to inflation adjustment every two years. Currently, the Morongo Unified School District imposes development fees of \$0.34 per square foot of commercial development. Development of the proposed project would result in a fee of approximately \$95,800 payable to Morongo Unified School District.

Utilizing employment factors of one employee for every 400 square feet of retail space and one employee for every 250 square feet of restaurant use, the proposed project is anticipated to generate approximately 589 jobs. It is anticipated that most of the new employment opportunities resulting from development of the proposed project will be filled by persons already residing in the community. As most of the new employment opportunities are anticipated to be filled by existing local area residents, a large influx of new residents to the Town is not anticipated. Because it is anticipated that most of the new employment opportunities generated by the proposed project would be filled by persons already residing in the community, and the project proponent is required to pay development fees to the Morongo Unified School District, potential impacts to schools are less than significant. As the proposed project is not anticipated to result in increases in school-age children in the area, there would be no need for the Morongo Unified School District to construct additional school facilities or modify existing school facilities to meet the increased demand on schools produced by the project. Accordingly, potential direct and indirect impacts on the environment that would be created by the construction of new or altered school facilities are less than significant and no mitigation is required.

Parks

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| Threshold | Would the proposed project result in substantial adverse physical impacts associated with the provision of new or physically altered governmental facilities, the construction of which could cause significant environmental impact, in order to achieve performance objectives for parks? |
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Potential environmental impacts associated with new parks and related facilities are discussed under Parks and Recreation (Section 4.14).

Other Public Facilities

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| Threshold | Would the proposed project result in substantial adverse physical impacts associated with the provision of new or physically altered governmental facilities, the construction of which could cause significant environmental impact, in order to maintain acceptable service ratios, response times, or other performance objectives for other public facilities? |
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Maintenance of public facilities and infrastructure in the Town would not be significantly altered by development of the proposed project. The services and utilities required to operate this manner of commercial uses would be typical of other uses in the Town, and will not result in excessive wear and tear on the existing circulation, storm drain, or other public facilities. Additionally, the Town will require the formation of a maintenance district for roads and other facilities. Accordingly, potential direct and indirect impacts are less than significant, and no mitigation is required.

Potentially Significant Impacts

The following impacts were determined to be potentially significant and mitigation would be required.

Impact 4.13.1 Fire Protection

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| Threshold | Would the proposed project result in substantial adverse physical impacts associated with the provision of new or physically altered governmental facilities, the construction of which could cause significant environmental impact, in order to maintain acceptable service ratios, response times, or other performance objectives for fire protection? |
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As discussed in the Population and Housing Section (4.12), the new retail service jobs that will be created by the proposed project would not induce substantial population growth because population levels have outpaced employment levels. Since there is an available workforce, most of the new jobs would likely be filled by existing residents of the Town and immediate vicinity. Impacts on fire protection services related to population growth would be considered less than significant; however, the proposed project's retail, gas station, and fast-food restaurant uses would increase demand for fire protection and prevention services. The addition of the proposed uses to the area would result in increased fire flow demand, as well as increased emergency calls for fire prevention and medical aid. Additionally, the project would contribute to increased traffic congestion on adjacent SR-62, which may, in turn, result in increased traffic collisions, as well as traffic congestion which could slow fire department response times to emergency calls. The National Fire Insurance Organization and the National Fire Protection Association recommend a maximum emergency response time of five minutes.¹

Currently, the Yucca Valley Fire District, a special district of the State, operates to provide fire protection services in the Town of Yucca Valley under management of the San Bernardino County Fire Department. The District covers approximately 54 square miles from two fire stations. Service is

¹ Town of Yucca Valley, *Draft General Plan EIR*, page III-114.

also provided by a third station in the Joshua Tree area through a mutual aid agreement. In addition, the District has automatic and/or mutual aid agreements with the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, Station 14; National Park Service, Black Rock Interagency Fire Center; Twentynine Palms Fire Department; Combat Center Fire Department, Marine Corps Air/Ground Combat Training Center; and the Morongo Valley Fire Department.

According to the County, the current levels of service for fire services exceed recommended capacity limits and the District is reliant upon the automatic and/or mutual aid agreements to provide the existing level of service. It is anticipated that the expansion of existing fire protection facilities and/or the construction of new fire protection facilities in order to meet recommended response times will be required based on County growth projections. Individually, the proposed project does not trigger the requirement of new or expanded facilities to provide better fire protection services; however, the increased demand on fire services which are operating at deficient service levels is considered a significant impact. Impacts associated with the construction or expansion of new facilities are cumulative in nature and are discussed in Section 4.13.5.

The proposed project will be designed, constructed, and operated per applicable fire prevention/protection standards. As indicated in the Town's General Plan EIR, the San Bernardino County Fire Department shall evaluate project plans on the Department's ability to provide proper fire protection in its review of new development plans. In addition, the project will be required to pay development fees used to fund capital costs associated with acquiring land for new fire stations, constructing new fire stations, and purchasing fire equipment for new fire stations.

As previously discussed, the proposed project will result in significant impacts related to increased fire flow demand, increased emergency calls, increased traffic on SR-62 which may slow response times and potentially increase traffic collisions. This is considered a significant impact that requires mitigation.

Mitigation Measures. Adherence to Mitigation Measures 4.13.1A and 4.13.1B will reduce potential impacts related to this issue to a less than significant level.

4.13.1A Prior to the issuance of occupancy permits, the project applicant shall make payment of fair share contribution fees (as determined by the Fire Chief) to a Town-wide public services assessment district.

4.13.1B Prior to the issuance of grading permits, the project applicant shall submit for review and approval by the Fire Chief, a site plan design which includes looped water service which provides adequate fire flow (as determined by the Fire Chief).

Level of Significance after Mitigation. With implementation of the identified mitigation measures, potential impacts related to fire protection services would be reduced to below the level of significance.

Impact 4.13.2 Police Protection

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| Threshold | Would the proposed project result in substantial adverse physical impacts associated with the provision of new or physically altered governmental facilities, the construction of which could cause significant environmental impact, in order to maintain acceptable service ratios, response times, or other performance objectives for police protection? |
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The new retail service jobs that will be created by the proposed project would not induce substantial population growth because most of the new jobs would likely be filled by existing residents of the Town and immediate vicinity. Impacts on police protection services related to population growth would be considered less than significant; however, the proposed project's retail, gas station, and fast-food restaurant uses would increase demand for police protection services. The proposed project will be designed and operated per applicable standards required by the SBCSD for new development. In addition, the project will be required to pay development fees used to fund capital costs associated with constructing new public safety structures and purchasing equipment for new public safety structures. While the proposed project would result in an increase in demand on police services which may slow existing response times, adherence to the mitigation measure identified below would reduce impacts related to police services to a less than significant level.

Mitigation Measures. Adherence to Mitigation Measures 4.13.2A will reduce potential impacts related to this issue to a less than significant level.

4.13.2A Prior to the issuance of occupancy permits, the project applicant shall make payment of fair share contribution fees to a City-wide public services assessment district.

Level of Significance after Mitigation. With implementation of the identified mitigation measures, potential impacts related to fire protection services would be reduced to below the level of significance.

4.13.5 Cumulative Impacts

Cumulative projects are shown in Chapter 2, Table 2.A and Figure 2.1. The project's potential for producing impacts on the provision of fire protection, police protection, schools, and other public facilities, as discussed above, is inherently a cumulative impact discussion. This is because the determination of impacts associated with the provision of these services is based on the incremental effect that the project would produce on the agency's available resources to provide the services. This determination includes existing and future demands produced by other development projects in the agencies service areas, providing a cumulative analysis. While the development of the proposed project and other projects occurring within the Town would result in increased demand for police and fire protection services, each project would be required to pay fees to a Town-wide public services assessment. The payment of fees by each of the projects provides police and fire agencies serving the area with funds required for new staffing and equipment to respond to increased demand. So, although each project contributes to a cumulative increase, the payment of fees by each project ensures that the cumulative impact remains less than significant.

Similarly, each project is required to pay school impact fees to reduce cumulative impacts to schools. While the project would result in new jobs for the area, and other similar commercial development would result in new jobs for the area including the approved Home Depot store located immediately to the east, as discussed in the Population and Housing Section (Section 4.12), the employment rates have not kept pace with the population increase in the area. As such, the cumulative effect of several commercial retailers bringing new jobs to the area would not be expected to result in population growth for the area, but would likely result in the fulfillment of new positions by persons already residing in the area. For this reason, the proposed project, in combination with other projects occurring within the Town, would not result in substantial population growth for the area, and therefore, would not result in significant cumulative impacts to schools, parks, and other public facilities. There are no projects that would, in combination with the proposed project, produce a significant impact on the provision of fire protection (with mitigation), police protection (with mitigation), schools, parks, and other public facilities. Therefore, there are no significant cumulative impacts associated with the provision of public services.

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