

HIGHWAY - STATE ROUTE (SR) 33 Traffic Impact Analysis

INTRODUCTION

This brochure provides a brief overview of policies applied by the PWA Transportation Department when evaluating the traffic impact of discretionary development on State Route (SR) 33 in the Ojai Valley. Because every development project is different, prospective developers are encouraged not to rely only on this brochure, but also to discuss projects with Transportation Department staff.

CURRENT POLICIES

The County General Plan (GP) requires any project in the unincorporated area that adds traffic to a road or intersection within the County Road Network that is currently operating at an unacceptable level of service (LOS), as defined in the GP, shall be prohibited unless mitigation measures are adopted to eliminate the traffic impacts, or there is a full funding commitment and a project to be completed within a reasonable period of time that will correct the unacceptable LOS. This is a difficult condition to meet.

A minimum acceptable LOS of E for SR 33 is set by the GP. Currently, portions of SR 33 function at LOS "F" during peak hours in peak direction.

- Ojai Valley Area Plan:
Land Use in the Ojai Valley is governed by a specific set of policies in the GP. The Ojai Valley Area Plan, a component of the GP, contains transportation and circulation policies regarding SR 33 and discretionary development affecting traffic levels on SR 33. This is available on-line at: http://www.ventura.org/rma/planning/pdf/plans/Ojai_Valley_Area_Plan.pdf

- County Initial Study Assessment Guidelines (ISAGs):
The ISAGs are adopted guidelines for preparing environmental impact analyses of proposed development projects based on the GP. The transportation section of these guidelines sets forth methods for evaluating traffic impacts. The ISAGs are available on-line: <http://www.ventura.org/rma/planning/eqa/isag.html>

Since development that would individually or cumulatively worsen traffic conditions on SR 33 is to be prohibited unless the impact is mitigated, discretionary development projects that increase peak hour traffic on SR 33 in the peak direction will likely be prohibited, unless the increased traffic is mitigated. Because of the unique policies of the Ojai Valley Area Plan, stricter evaluation of traffic impacts is required for Ojai Valley discretionary development.

WHAT IS LEVEL OF SERVICE "F" AND WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

LOS F occurs when the Volume to Capacity Ratio (V/C) of a roadway reaches or exceeds 1.0, i.e., the traffic demands are at or in excess of 100% of the road or intersection capacity.

EVALUATION OF TRAFFIC IMPACTS ON SR 33

Pursuant to the above policies, the standard for determining whether a project is prohibited is whether the project adds one or more trips to SR 33 in peak hours and direction. The peak hours and directions are:

Southbound AM 6:30 – 9:00
Northbound PM 3:30 – 6:30

To evaluate traffic impacts, a Traffic Impact Study (TIS) will be required for most new or expanded discretionary development that is located within the Ojai Valley Traffic Impact Zone. The TIS must be submitted along with a project application. The ISAGs provide standards for acceptable TIS. The requirement for a TIS may be waived or the study scope reduced by the Transportation Department.

Additional key information:

- Typically, for modifications to permits for existing businesses without significant expansion, a TIS is not required.

- For projects that appear likely to not increase peak-hour traffic on SR 33 due to their location or function, an abbreviated TIS might be appropriate.
- For projects that involve the re-use of a building or site that previously generated peak-hour traffic on SR 33, credit may be given for previous traffic volumes pursuant to a TIS.
- A full TIS is usually required for any land division application.
- Discretionary development that increases residential density in the Traffic Impact Zone would be assumed to increase peak-hour traffic on SR 33 under most circumstances and require a full TIS.
- Commercial projects that generate solely local traffic within the Ojai Valley may be able to demonstrate, through a TIS, no increase in peak hour/direction traffic volumes.

HOW SHOULD ONE SUBMIT A PROJECT APPLICATION THAT MIGHT IMPACT SR 33?

If you choose to submit an application for a project that could potentially impact SR 33 during peak hours, you should work with a traffic consultant to complete a TIS. It is strongly recommended that this study be prepared before a project application is submitted. Consultants preparing such a TIS should submit a proposed scope of work to the Transportation Department via RMA Planning before embarking on the preparation of a TIS.

ARE THERE EXCEPTIONS TO THE SR 33 PROCEDURE?

Unless your project is exempted, the GP policies apply to all projects requiring discretionary approval. There are limited exceptions to the policies in the GP, based on State law and overall regional goals to increase low-income housing opportunities. However, these exceptions are very restrictive. RMA Planning Department will be able to advise you if any exceptions apply to your project.

WHAT ARE SOME OF THE WAYS TO MITIGATE PEAK-HOUR IMPACTS?

Mitigations must be verifiable and enforceable. Just saying that you will do something is not acceptable.

Your traffic consultant can assist with ways to minimize peak-hour impacts. Examples include limiting hours of operation to off-peak periods/weekends, or requiring other than single-occupant vehicles for transportation. If the project involves the reuse or redevelopment of an existing facility, it may be possible take credit for the trips associated with the existing use.

REQUESTS AND INQUIRIES

For question or suggestions, please call the Transportation Department at: **(805) 654-2049** or on-line at: <http://www.countyofventura.org>

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