

## Measuring Transportation: LOS versus VMT

In 2013, the State of California passed Senate Bill 743 (SB 743), which alters how transportation impacts from projects are measured in environmental reviews starting on July 1, 2020.

Prior to SB743, the City of Sacramento, like most California cities, determined transportation impacts by measuring automobile delay or congestion with a reporting system called Level of Service (LOS). If a project worsened congestion beyond a certain level then the project would have to mitigate its impact by doing something to lessen congestion. That mitigation often came in the form of adding more lanes of travel. While this could temporarily reduce congestion, it ultimately attracts more cars and comparable, if not worse, congestion while also worsening conditions for pedestrians and bicyclists, now faced with wider streets.

To reflect California's commitment to reducing vehicle emissions that contribute to climate change and pose public health risks, SB743 mandated that congestion would no longer be used to measure transportation impacts and that some other measurement must be used. Measuring project effect on Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) is the recommended method. VMT is a calculation of every trip taken by a person multiplied by the length of each trip. While total VMT is projected to increase in Sacramento as our population grows, VMT per person must decrease over time in order to meet State air quality and sustainability goals.

Under this new method, if the average VMT per person of a project would exceed an established threshold, then mitigations have to be taken to bring the average down. Instead of adding more lanes, these mitigations could include strategies like enhancing transit, expanding car share, or implementing parking pricing. Such mitigations are more consistent with City goals to balance our transportation system for all modes of travel considering all ages and abilities.

