

3.4 Environmental Justice

Title VI of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, 42 U.S.C. 2000 (Title VI) provides in section 601 that: “No person in the United States shall, on the ground of race, color, or national origin, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance.” Executive Order (EO) 12898 *Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority and Low-Income Populations*, issued in February, 1994, broadens the Title VI language to require that disproportionately high and adverse health or environmental impacts to minority and low-income populations be avoided or minimized to the extent feasible. EO 12898 requires Federal agencies to achieve environmental justice by identifying and addressing disproportionately high and adverse human health and environmental effects, including the interrelated social and economic effects of their programs, policies, and activities on minority populations and low-income populations in the United States. The U.S. Department of Transportation is committed to embracing the objectives of Executive Order 12898 and Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 by promoting enforcement of all applicable planning and environmental regulations and by promoting nondiscrimination in its programs, policies, and activities that affect human health and the environment.

The Final Strategy for implementation of E.O. 12898 was published in the Federal Register on June 29, 1995. The objectives can be summarized as: 1) improve the environment and public health and safety in the transportation of people and goods, and the development and maintenance of transportation systems and services; 2) harmonize transportation policies and investments with environmental concerns, reflecting an appropriate consideration of economic and social interests; 3) consider the interests, issues, and contributions of affected communities, disclose appropriate information, and give communities an opportunity to be involved in decision making.

The primary elements of the Department of Transportation Strategy include: 1) public outreach for implementation of the strategy; 2) creation of a DOT Order on Environmental Justice which a) will review existing policies and programs, b) develop guidelines for determining whether or not an action is likely to have a disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental effect on low income and minority communities, and c) develop consistency between Environmental Justice objectives and the requirements of other statutes; and 3) train program managers to incorporate the Environmental Justice policies.

The Department of Transportation and FHWA have subsequently issued the Department of Transportation Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Population and Low-Income Populations (published in the April 15, 1997 *Federal Register*, Vol. 62, No. 72) and FHWA Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations (6640.23, December 2, 1998) to ensure compliance with Executive Order 12898.

Figures 3.4.1 through 3.4.4 illustrate socioeconomic characteristics by census tract for the HCLE Corridor, and graphs that identify ethnicity and income characteristics for the alternatives (by including all tracts through which each alternative passes) and with

Figure 3.4.1 - Environmental Justice: Non-White Population

Figure 3.4.2 - Environmental Justice: Hispanic Population

Figure 3.4.3 - Environmental Justice: Poverty

Figure 3.4.4 - Environmental Justice: Median Household Income

Riverside County as a benchmark.¹ Listed below are the four measures used as a basis to evaluate environmental justice considerations:

- C percentage of non-White residents (Figure 3.4.1),
- C percentage of Hispanic residents (the Census Bureau considers Hispanic or Latino ethnicity distinct from racial background) (Figure 3.4.2),
- C percentage of population below poverty level (Figure 3.4.3), and
- C median household income (Figure 3.4.4).

Residents of Riverside County are predominantly White (66 percent). The racial composition of most tracts within the study areas for each alternative is not substantially different from that of the County. Alternatives H1 and H3, both just under 40 percent, and Alternatives 1a and 1b, both near 35 percent, have a higher proportion of non-White residents than the County (34 percent). Areas in Perris along I-215 from SR-74 north to Cajalco Road/Ramona Expressway (potentially affected by Alternatives H1 and H3) include census tracts containing from 50 to almost 70 percent non-White residents.

Countywide, 36 percent of the population reported Hispanic ethnicity in the 2000 census. The population characteristics of the census tracts affected by each HCLE alternative were aggregated. Alternatives H1 and H3, near 37 percent, have a slightly higher average concentration of Hispanic residents than the County. More than half of the population in several tracts affected by the alternatives are Hispanic residents, primarily in Perris along I-215 from SR-74 north to Cajalco Road/Ramona Expressway (potentially affected by Alternatives H1 and H3), and in Lake Elsinore between I-15 and the lake (potentially affected by Alternatives 4a, 4d, 5a, and 5d).

The 1990 Census reported that 11 percent of Riverside County residents lived below poverty. Using the same methodology applied above, it was determined that Alternatives 4a (13.3 percent) and 4c (13 percent) had the highest average level of poverty among the HCLE Corridor alternatives. Reflecting the generally lower incomes of the rural portions of the study area, the average of every alternative in the HCLE Corridor, except 6a and 6b, reported poverty levels at or above those of Riverside County. Four tracts, including three surrounding Perris (potentially affected by every set of alternatives except 6a and 6b) and one in west Hemet (potentially affected by Alternatives 4a, 4c, 4d), reported more than 16 percent of residents living in poverty in 1990.

Median household income in Riverside County averaged \$33,081 in the 1990 census, which was met or exceeded by the average of half the HCLE Corridor alternatives. Reflecting the preceding discussion of poverty levels, the lowest median household income was generated by residents affected by Alternatives 4a (\$24,763) and 4c (\$26,480). Three tracts, one in Perris (potentially affected by Alternatives H1 and H3) and two in Hemet (potentially affected by Alternatives 4a, 4c, 4d), reported 1990 median household income of less than \$20,000.

¹ A combination of 1990 and 2000 decennial census data is used, as not all components of the 2000 U.S. Census data had been published at the tract level at the time this document was prepared.