CEQA requires a discussion of how the proposed project could induce growth. The *CEQA Guidelines*, Section 15126.2(d), identifies a project as growth inducing if it fosters economic or population growth, or the construction of additional housing, either directly or indirectly, in the surrounding environment. These elements of growth could occur at different geographic or temporal scales, shifting growth in time or between areas.

Under CEQA, growth inducement is not necessarily considered detrimental, beneficial, or environmentally significant. Typically, the growth inducing potential of a project is considered significant if it fosters growth or a concentration of population in excess of what is assumed in relevant master plans, land use plans, or in projections made by regional planning agencies. Significant growth impacts also could be manifested through the provision of infrastructure or service capacity to accommodate growth beyond the levels currently permitted by local or regional plans and policies. In general, growth induced by a project is considered a significant impact if it directly or indirectly affects the ability of agencies to provide needed public services, or if it can be demonstrated that the potential growth significantly affects the environment in some other way.

Section 7.1 in Chapter 7.0 of this EIS/EIR addresses the potential for the proposed project to affect growth in western Riverside County.

Alternatives 1a, 1b, 5a through e, H1 and H3 (except for the segment that overlaps I-215) and 6a and 6b primarily traverse areas that are designated for low-density development and natural and open space areas, and have planned community centers or retail commercial within relatively short distances that could be accessed by these alternative routes. Thus, these alternatives could potentially result in additional pressure to increase development intensity. The HCLE Corridor alternatives, however, would not in and of themselves directly or indirectly cause expansion of overall study area growth beyond that planned in the General Plan because should the size and intensity of the planned development areas be incrementally increased, other planned development areas and activity centers could be reduced in intensity, due to the density limits in the Area Plans. The HCLE alternatives would facilitate or accommodate the growth planned for the study area, and may result in adjustments to the precise location, size, and intensity of the planned activity centers and developments but would not cause substantial new unplanned growth.

6.17 Environmentally Superior Alternative

6.17.1 No Build Alternative (General Plan Build Out)

The No Build Alternative (General Plan Build Out) is the environmentally superior alternative to the proposed project for the following environmental topics: hydrology, noise, biology, wetlands, socioeconomics, environmental justice, land use, cultural resources, visual, light and glare, and impacts to 4(f) resources. The No Build Alternative is environmentally superior in these areas because it would not involve reservation of right-of-way for the ultimate construction of a major new transportation facility that would incur landform modification and associated environmental impacts.

However, the No Build Alternative would result in greater impacts than the alternatives with regard to air quality, energy consumption, public services, and traffic and

circulation. Without the CETAP Corridor, these areas would be impacted in the long term as a result of worsening levels of service on the existing circulation system and the need for improvement of arterial and freeways. As a result, residents, businesses, and emergency personnel would experience a reduction in accessibility and a worsening of the existing quality of life. In addition, the No Build Alternative is inconsistent with the proposed Riverside County General Plan and would not provide the necessary transportation infrastructure to accommodate future economic development in western Riverside County.

For those issues for which the No Build Alternative is the Environmentally Superior Alternative, the CEQA Guidelines (Section 15126.6(e)(2)) stipulate that the EIR shall identify an environmentally superior alternative among the other alternatives. Selection of the environmentally superior alternative for the entire length of the Corridor is difficult because of the variety of areas through which the routes traverse. However, the following discussion summarizes the environmental superiority of the alternatives for those issues for which a difference in impact was discernable.

6.17.2 Build Alternatives

Determining an Environmentally Superior Alternative among the Build Alternatives requires consideration of the various environmental topics addressed in this EIS/EIR. When comparing the environmental effects among alternatives, the relative impact and context of the alternatives must be considered in addition to the absolute quantities of impacts (for example, an alternative that displaces 100 properties within a localized area may have a more severe impact than an alternative that displaces 300 properties spread throughout a 20 mi corridor). This consideration is important given the variable lengths and locations of the HCLE Corridor alternatives.

Of the Build Alternatives, Alternative 5a is considered the Environmentally Superior Alternative, since it is one of the less damaging alternatives with respect to aquatic and biological resources, cultural resources, socioeconomics (displacements), land use, and Section 4(f) resources. Alternatives 6a and 6b are the least damaging alternatives for aquatic resources, but have severe socioeconomic impacts to the communities of Menifee and Canyon Lake. Alternative H3 is one of the less damaging alternatives for biological resources, but is one of the more damaging alternatives for aquatic resources and Section 4(f) resources, and also impacts low income residents in south Perris and west Hemet.