

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 WT Corridor, and provide graphs that identify the ethnicity and income characteristics for the alternatives (by including all tracts through which each alternative

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

passes), with Riverside County as a benchmark.¹ Listed below are the four measures used as the 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)
- 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 area for each alternative is considerably less diverse than the County. Alternatives 5a, 5b (which borders the Pechanga Indian Reservation), and H, averaged about 20 percent non-White residents. Only Tract 432.10 in Murrieta (transected by Alternative H) reported more than 30 percent non-Whites.

Countywide, 36 percent of the population reported Hispanic ethnicity in the 2000 census. The aggregate population characteristics of the census tracts affected by each WT alternative indicate that none of the WT Corridor alternatives approach this average concentration of Hispanic residents. Only Tract 432.15 (transected by Alternative 5a and Alternative H) exceeds the County average of Hispanic residents (42%). It is located in the western portion of the study area adjacent to Alternative H.

The 1990 Census reported that 11 percent of Riverside County residents lived below poverty. Using the same methodology applied above, none of the WT Corridor alternatives approach this average concentration of residents in poverty. Only Tract 432.03 (transected by Alternatives 3, 5a, and 5b) exceeded the County average of residents in poverty, and its 12 percent total proportion does not suggest a low income area.

Median household income in Riverside County averaged \$33,081 in the 1990 census, which was exceeded by the average household income of the aggregate census tracts associated with every WT Corridor alternative. Household income in two individual tracts measured lower than the County average (427.02 and 427.07, affected by Alternative H).

Generally speaking, the WT Corridor study area, including the areas within the alternative bandwidths, does not have a high minority or low-income population component in relation to the rest of the County. According to the 2000 and 1990 census tract level data from the Bureau of the Census, none of the proposed alternatives in the WT Corridor are minority and/or low-income neighborhoods.

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.