

3.5 Transportation and Circulation

The existing circulation and transportation system serving the proposed MSHCP Plan Area, western Riverside County, is composed of a series of separate modes or types of passenger travel and goods movement. These modes of travel and goods movement include passenger vehicles and truck freight, transit, passenger and freight rail, passenger and cargo air, non-motorized systems (bicycle facilities, pedestrian facilities, and equestrian facilities) and major utility corridors.

3.5.1 Existing Transportation/Circulation Conditions

The proposed Plan Area's transportation system is composed of numerous State highways (both freeways and arterial highways), as well as numerous County and city routes. The public transit system includes fixed route public transit systems, common bus carriers, AMTRAK (intercity rail service), MetroLink (commuter rail service), and other local agency transit and paratransit services. In addition, the transportation system in the proposed Plan Area includes general aviation facilities, limited passenger air service within the proposed Plan Area, extensive air passenger facilities in the Southern California and San Diego regions, freight rail service, bicycle facilities, and other non-motorized forms of transportation (pedestrian and equestrian trails).

Travel within the proposed Plan Area is a function of the size and spatial distribution of population and economic activity and the relationship to other major activity centers within the Los Angeles Basin or the Southern California Region (such as those located in Los Angeles, Orange, Ventura, San Bernardino, and Imperial Counties). Outside the Los Angeles Basin, other major urban centers that interact with western Riverside County include those in San Diego County to the south and Kern County located in the San Joaquin Valley to the north. In addition, there is some travel between the western and eastern portions of the County (i.e., between Riverside and Blythe). The distance between these two subregions of Riverside County is greater than the distance between the City of Riverside and the City of Oxnard in the northernmost portion of the Southern California Region (approximately 3 hours by car).

Due to the interrelationship of urban and rural activities (employment, housing and services), and the low average density of existing land uses, the private automobile is the dominant mode of travel within the proposed Plan Area. Trips by transit currently represent less than 2 percent of all trips made in the County. Public transportation, where service is available, is utilized primarily by a transit-dependent population (senior citizens, students, low-income residents, and the physically disabled) that generally does not have access to automobiles.

The proposed Plan Area's industrial and agricultural economies depend on safe and efficient goods movement. The County is responsible for maintaining an extensive network of low volume rural roads in sparsely settled areas to service goods movement and the agricultural industry. Large trucks are the primary means of