



Memorandum

To: Board of Directors

From: Madilyn Jacobsen, Transportation Planner
Stefania Castillo, Transportation Planner

Subject: **2019 Essentials California Environmental Quality Act Training**

On November 1st, we attended the 2019 Essentials California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Workshop at the Santa Clara Valley Water District Offices in San Jose. The workshop was hosted by the Association for Environmental Professionals, which is an association of public and private sector environmental planning professionals. Transportation projects implemented by the Transportation Agency for Monterey County, as well as partner agencies' non-transportation land use developments reviewed by the Transportation Agency frequently require compliance with CEQA. The workshop improved our understanding about the CEQA process and current trends in CEQA, which will assist us with document review and project development.

A panel of CEQA experts, which included environmental planners and environmental attorneys, taught the workshop sessions. The workshop began with a history of CEQA and an overview of the different types of CEQA documents, such as a Negative Declaration and an Environmental Impact Report (EIR). The workshop also included a thorough review of the components of an EIR and the process for developing an EIR.

This workshop provided us a chance to understand foundational information about the CEQA process. In particular:

- The importance and role of developing a stable project description at the beginning of the environmental process; and
- Insight on the relationship between an EIR and public engagement, such as recognizing how environmental documents are intended to provide a platform for public comments on environmental impacts; and
- The difference in content and legality between a project level environmental document and a programmatic level environmental document; and
- The relationship between CEQA and Federal National Environmental Policy Act environment review documents; and

- Updates to the state's CEQA guidelines to incorporate Wildfires and Energy into the CEQA process.

As Agency staff reviews CEQA documents for new projects in Monterey County, staff will need to be cognizant of recent court rulings and state legislation to ensure that project sponsors are adhering to current CEQA practices. This CEQA training will be particularly relevant as TAMC prepares the Final EIR for the Fort Ord Regional Trail & Greenway and initiates the environmental process for other Measure X projects such as and Highway 1 Busway.

The CEQA workshop was well attended by professionals from the private and public sector from around the Monterey Bay Area. We also were able to meet professionals from the Bay Area that may be useful contacts in the future. More importantly, the CEQA workshop provided us with the knowledgebase to feel more confident and comfortable navigating the CEQA process.