



# South Coast Air Quality Management District

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## **Draft Environmental Impact Report (Draft EIR) for the Proposed Beaumont Pointe Specific Plan (Proposed Project) (SCH No. 2020099007)**

South Coast Air Quality Management District (South Coast AQMD) staff appreciates the opportunity to comment on the above-mentioned document. The City of Beaumont is the Lead Agency under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) for the Proposed Project. The following comments include recommended revisions to mitigation measures, CEQA air quality analyses for overlapping construction and operation activities, and information about South Coast AQMD permits that the Lead Agency should include in the Final EIR.

### **South Coast AQMD Staff's Summary of Project Information in the Draft EIR**

Based on the Draft EIR, the Proposed Project consists of amendments to the City of Beaumont's General Plan to establish and adopt the Beaumont Point Specific Plan, which is intended to serve as a regulatory document that will guide the future development of the Proposed Project site.<sup>1</sup> The Proposed Project site consists of approximately 539.9 acres of undeveloped terrain, abuts highway State Route 60, and is located near the southwest corner of Jack Rabbit Trail and Frontage Road, adjacent to the City of Beaumont, Riverside County.<sup>2</sup> Construction will occur in three phases and is expected to take approximately 4 years and 9 months with full buildout anticipated for year 2027.<sup>3</sup> During this period the Proposed Project anticipates construction of approximately 336,000 square feet (30.2 acres) in general commercial and 4,995,000 square feet (232.6) in industrial.<sup>4</sup> 277.1 acres of the Proposed Project site is planned as open space.<sup>5</sup> Specifically the industrial portion of the site is anticipated to be developed with five industrial buildings that would be occupied with warehouse distribution operators.<sup>6</sup> These five buildings would range in size between 600,000 square feet and 1,379,000 square feet<sup>7</sup>, support cold-storage,<sup>8</sup> and total 806 dock doors<sup>9</sup>. At full buildout the Proposed Project is anticipated to result in between 2,240<sup>10</sup> to 2,276<sup>11</sup> truck trips per day.

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<sup>1</sup> Draft EIR. 1.0 Executive Summary. Page 1-1 through Page 1-4.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* 3.0 Project Description. Page 3-22 through Page 3-24.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* Page 3-10 through Page 3-11.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.* Page 3-27.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.* Page 3-21.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.* 4.3 Air Quality. Page 4.3-28.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.* 3.0 Project Description. Page 3-21 through Page 3-22.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.* Page 3-27.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.* 4.17 Transportation. Page 4.17-9.

## South Coast AQMD Staff's Comments on the Draft EIR

### *Recommended Air Quality Mitigation Measures*

The Lead Agency concludes that construction activities resulting from the Proposed Project could result in emissions from on-site and off-site sources that exceed South Coast AQMD's CEQA regional construction mass daily thresholds<sup>12</sup> for volatile organic compounds (VOCs) and oxides of nitrogen (NOx).<sup>13</sup> With mitigation measures, the Proposed Project site would still exceed the regional mass daily thresholds for NOx during construction.<sup>14</sup> The Lead Agency also concludes that operational activities resulting from the Proposed Project at full buildout would result in emissions that exceed South Coast AQMD's CEQA regional operation mass daily thresholds for VOCs, NOx, carbon monoxide (CO), particulate matter with an aerodynamic diameter equal to or less than 10 microns (PM10) and particulate matter with an aerodynamic diameter equal to or less than 2.5 microns (PM2.5).<sup>15</sup> With mitigation measures,<sup>16</sup> the Proposed Project site would still exceed the regional mass daily thresholds for NOx, CO, PM10 and PM2.5 during operation and as such these emissions are considered significant and unavoidable.<sup>17</sup>

CEQA requires that all feasible mitigation measures that go beyond what is required by law be utilized to minimize or eliminate significant adverse impacts. The Proposed Project is a guiding regulatory document for the future development of the Beaumont Pointe Specific Plan. The Draft EIR for the Proposed Project serves as the first-tier, programmatic level analysis that can provide guidance to subsequent, project-level environmental analyses. South Coast AQMD staff therefore recommends that the Lead Agency include the following mitigation measures in the Final EIR to further reduce emissions from construction and operation activities that may result from future implementation of the Proposed Project.

### *Recommended Mitigation Measures for Construction*

Given that the Proposed Project is meant to guide development through at least year 2027, South Coast AQMD staff recommends that the Lead Agency consider including additional mitigation measures in the Final EIR to further reduce the Proposed Project's significant and unavoidable air quality impacts during construction. It is reasonably foreseeable that Tier 4 might not be the cleanest technology when construction occurs later during the approximately 4 year and 9-month time span of the Proposed Project's planned construction period. One of CARB's strategies for reducing emissions from off-road construction equipment aims to start implementing off-road Tier 5 in 2027/2028.<sup>18</sup> Furthermore, the Governor's Executive Order in September 2020 (N-79-20) requires CARB to develop and propose a full transition to Zero Emissions (ZE) off-road

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<sup>12</sup> South Coast AQMD Air Quality Significance Thresholds. Accessed at: <http://www.aqmd.gov/docs/default-source/ceqa/handbook/scaqmd-air-quality-significance-thresholds.pdf>

<sup>13</sup> Draft EIR. 4.3 Air Quality. Pages 4.3-38 through 4.3-39.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.* Pages 4.3-54 through 4.3-55.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.* Pages 4.3-39 through 4.3-41.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.* Pages 4.3-51 through 4.3-54.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.* Pages 4.3-55 through 4.3-58.

<sup>18</sup> Presentation accessed at: <http://www.aqmd.gov/docs/default-source/clean-air-plans/air-quality-management-plans/2022-air-quality-management-plan/combined-construction-carb-amp-aqmp-presentations-01-27-21.pdf>

equipment by 2035, where feasible.<sup>19</sup> Therefore, South Coast AQMD staff recommends that the Lead Agency revise the air quality analysis section in the DEIR<sup>20</sup> to include a mitigation measure that commits it to using the cleanest technology for construction during future development projects, if available and feasible, and include the revisions in the Final EIR. If the revisions are not included in the Final EIR, the Lead Agency should provide reasons for not having them supported by substantial evidence in the record.

Other Construction Mitigation Measures to include:

- Require that, at a minimum, future development use 2014 and newer haul trucks (including material delivery trucks and soil import/export) entering or on the Proposed Project site. Additionally, all heavy-duty haul trucks should also meet CARB's lowest optional low oxides of nitrogen (NOx) standard.<sup>21</sup>
- Require the use of electric or alternative-fueled (i.e., non-diesel) construction equipment, if available, including but not limited to, concrete/industrial saws, pumps, aerial lifts, material hoist, air compressors, forklifts, excavator, wheel loader, and soil compactors.
- Owners and operators of future development projects shall maintain records of all trucks associated with project construction to document that each truck used meets these emission standards and make the records available for inspection. The Lead Agency should conduct regular inspections of future development projects.
- Provide electric vehicle (EV) charging stations or, at a minimum, provide the electrical infrastructure and electrical panels shall be appropriately sized. Electrical hookups should be provided for trucks to plug in any onboard auxiliary equipment.
- Provide temporary traffic controls such as a flag person, during all phases of significant construction activity to maintain smooth traffic flow, where necessary.
- Provide dedicated turn lanes for the movement of construction trucks and equipment on- and off-site, where applicable.
- Ensure that vehicle traffic inside the project site is as far away as feasible from sensitive receptors.
- Reduce traffic speeds on all unpaved roads to 15 miles per hour (mph) or less.
- Suspend all excavating and grading operations when wind speeds (as instantaneous gusts) exceed 25 mph.

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<sup>19</sup> Presentation accessed at: <http://www.aqmd.gov/docs/default-source/clean-air-plans/air-quality-management-plans/2022-air-quality-management-plan/combined-construction-carb-amp-aqmp-presentations-01-27-21.pdf>

<sup>20</sup> Draft EIR. 4.3 Air Quality. Pages 4.3-51 through 4.3-54.

<sup>21</sup> CARB's optional low-NOx emission standard can be found at: <https://ww2.arb.ca.gov/our-work/programs/optional-reduced-nox-standards>

- Suspend use of all construction activities that generate air pollutant emissions during first stage smog alerts.
- Configure construction parking to minimize traffic interference.
- Require covering of all trucks hauling dirt, sand, soil, or other loose materials.
- Install wheel washers where vehicles enter and exit the construction site onto paved roads or wash off trucks and any equipment leaving the site for each trip.
- Apply non-toxic soil stabilizers according to manufacturers' specifications to all inactive construction areas (previously graded areas inactive for ten days or more).
- Replace ground cover in disturbed areas as quickly as possible to minimize dust.
- Pave roads and road shoulders, where applicable.
- Sweep streets at the end of the day with South Coast AQMD Rule 1186 and 1186.1 compliant sweepers if visible soil is carried onto adjacent public paved roads (recommend water sweepers that utilize reclaimed water).

#### *Recommended Mitigation Measures for Operation*

As stated in the Air Quality section of the Draft EIR, the majority of the Proposed Project's NO<sub>x</sub>, CO, PM<sub>10</sub> and PM<sub>2.5</sub> operational emissions come from mobile sources.<sup>22</sup> Specifically, for the NO<sub>x</sub>, PM<sub>10</sub> and PM<sub>2.5</sub> emissions, most are derived from the 2,240<sup>23</sup> to 2,276<sup>24</sup> truck trips per day that the Proposed Project will attract. Project-level air quality mitigation measures for operational air quality impacts from mobile sources that the Lead Agency should consider and include in the Final EIR and any subsequent CEQA document and future development project may include the following:

- MM 4.3-5 states that, "... the Project Applicant or successor in interest shall provide documentation to the City demonstrating that occupants/tenants of the Project site have been provided documentation on funding opportunities, such as the Carl Moyer Program, that provide incentives for using cleaner-than—required engines and equipment."<sup>25</sup> South Coast AQMD staff recommends that the Lead Agency revise MM 4.3-5 to include the incentive and programs found on the South Coast AQMD Incentives & Programs landing page, <http://www.aqmd.gov/home/programs>. South Coast AQMD offers a broad range of programs for businesses, the community, and local government that help to achieve cleaner air quality for all. Many of these programs offer financial incentives for implementing new clean air technologies. Some provide partnerships and new ways of addressing air quality issues throughout the South Coast Basin.

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<sup>22</sup> Draft EIR. 4.3 Air Quality. Page 4.3-56.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.* 3.0 Project Description. Page 3-27.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.* 4.17 Transportation. Page 4.17-9.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.* 4.3 Air Quality. Page 4.3-52.

- The Lead Agency should require the use of ZE or NZE heavy-duty trucks by future development projects during operation such as trucks with natural gas engines that meet CARB's adopted optional NOx emission standard of 0.02 g/bhp-hr, if and when feasible. Given the state's clean truck rules and regulations aiming to accelerate the utilization and market penetration of ZE and NZE trucks such as the Advanced Clean Trucks Rule<sup>26</sup> and the Heavy-Duty Low NOx Omnibus Regulation,<sup>27</sup> ZE and NZE trucks will become increasingly more available to use. The Lead Agency can and should require future development projects to have a phase-in schedule to incentivize the use of these cleaner operating trucks to reduce any significant adverse air quality impacts. South Coast AQMD staff is available to discuss the availability of current and upcoming truck technologies and incentive programs. At a minimum, require the use of 2014 model year trucks.
- Limit the daily number of trucks allowed at future development projects to the levels analyzed in the subsequent, project-level environmental analyses for these projects. If higher daily truck volumes are anticipated to visit the site, additional analysis should be done through CEQA prior to allowing this higher activity level.

Design considerations that the Lead Agency should consider and include in the Final EIR for future development projects to further reduce air quality and health risk impacts include the following:

- Clearly mark truck routes with trailblazer signs, so that trucks will not travel next to or near sensitive land uses (e.g., residences, schools, day care centers, etc.).
- Restrict overnight truck parking in sensitive land uses by providing overnight truck parking inside the future development project site.
- Design future development projects such that any check-in point for trucks is inside the project site to ensure that there are no trucks queuing outside.
- Design a future development project to ensure that truck traffic inside the project site is as far away as feasible from sensitive receptors.

#### *Additional Air Quality and Greenhouse Gas Mitigation Measures*

The Lead Agency concludes that the impact of greenhouse gas emissions are significant and unavoidable for the Proposed Project at full buildout,<sup>28</sup> even with mitigation measures.<sup>29</sup> Given

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<sup>26</sup> CARB. June 25, 2020. *Advanced Clean Trucks Rule*. Accessed at: <https://ww2.arb.ca.gov/our-work/programs/advanced-clean-trucks>.

<sup>27</sup> CARB has recently passed a variety of new regulations that require new, cleaner heavy-duty truck technology to be sold and used in state. For example, on August 27, 2020, CARB approved the Heavy-Duty Low NOx Omnibus Regulation, which will require all trucks to meet the adopted emission standard of 0.05 g/hp-hr starting with engine model year 2024. Accessed at: <https://ww2.arb.ca.gov/rulemaking/2020/hdomnibuslownox>.

<sup>28</sup> Draft EIR. 4.8 Greenhouse Gas Emissions. Pages 4.8-34 through 4.3-36.

this, South Coast AQMD staff suggests the Lead Agency review the references listed below and thereafter consider including additional recommended mitigation measures in the Final EIR:

- California Attorney General’s Bureau of Environmental Justice guidance document on Warehouse projects, *Warehouse Projects: Best Practices and Mitigation Measures to Comply with the California Environmental Quality Act*<sup>30</sup>
- South Coast AQMD 2022 South Coast Air Quality Management Plan,<sup>31</sup> appendices:
  - IV-A: South Coast AQMD’s Stationary and Mobile Source Control Measures
  - IV-B: CARB’s Strategy for South Coast
  - IV-C: SCAG’s Regional Transportation Strategy and Control Measures
- United States Environmental Protection Agency (U.S. EPA): Mobile Source Pollution - Environmental Justice and Transportation<sup>32</sup>

### *Health Risk Reduction Strategies*

Notwithstanding the court rulings, South Coast AQMD staff recognizes that the Lead Agency that approves CEQA documents retain the authority to include any additional information they deem relevant to assessing and mitigating the environmental impacts of a project. South Coast AQMD staff is concerned about the potential public health impacts of siting sensitive populations within proximity of sources of air pollution (e.g., warehouse, freeway, airport). It is therefore recommended that prior to approving future development projects, the Lead Agency consider the impacts of air pollutants on people who will live in and/or nearby a new project location and provide mitigation where necessary. Additionally, South Coast AQMD staff suggests that the Lead Agency review the CARB Air Quality Land Use and Handbook: A Community Health Perspective<sup>33</sup> as it is a reference guide for evaluating and reducing air pollution impacts associated with new projects that go through the land use decision-making process with additional guidance on strategies to reduce air pollution exposure near high-volume roadways available in CARB’s technical advisory.<sup>34</sup>

Many strategies are available to reduce exposures, including, but not limited to, building filtration systems with Minimum Efficiency Reporting Values (MERV) 13 or better, or in some cases, MERV 15 or better is recommended, building design, orientation, location, vegetation barriers or landscaping screening. Enhanced filtration units are capable of reducing exposures. However, enhanced filtration systems have limitations. For example, in a study that South Coast

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<sup>29</sup> Draft EIR. 4.8 Greenhouse Gas Emissions. Pages 4.8-60 through 4.3-62.

<sup>30</sup> State of California – Department of Justice. Warehouse Projects: Best Practices and Mitigation Measures to Comply with the California Environmental Quality Act. Accessed at: <https://oag.ca.gov/system/files/media/warehouse-best-practices.pdf>

<sup>31</sup> 2022 South Coast AQMP. Access at: <http://www.aqmd.gov/home/air-quality/clean-air-plans/air-quality-mgt-plan>

<sup>32</sup> United States Environmental Protection Agency (U.S. EPA): Mobile Source Pollution - Environmental Justice and Transportation. Access at: <https://www.epa.gov/mobile-source-pollution/environmental-justice-and-transportation>

<sup>33</sup> California Air Resources Board (CARB) Air Quality Land Use and Handbook: A Community Health Perspective. Access at: <https://www.arb.ca.gov/ch/handbook.pdf>

<sup>34</sup> CARB’s technical advisory can be found at: <https://www.arb.ca.gov/ch/landuse.htm>

AQMD conducted to investigate filters,<sup>35</sup> a cost burden is expected to be within the range of \$120 to \$240 per year to replace each filter panel. The initial start-up cost could substantially increase if a Heating, Ventilation, and Air Conditioning (HVAC) system need to be installed and if standalone filter units are required. Installation costs may vary, including costs for conducting site assessments and obtaining permits and approvals before filters can be installed. Other costs may include filter life monitoring, annual maintenance, and training for conducting maintenance and reporting. In addition, because the filters would not be effective unless the HVAC system is running, there may be increased energy consumption. It is typically assumed that the filters operate 100 percent of the time while individual sensitive receptors are indoors, and the environmental analysis does not generally account for the times when such individuals have their windows or doors open or are in common space areas of the project. Additionally, these filters have no ability to filter out any toxic gases. Furthermore, when used filters are replaced, the replacement has the potential to result in emissions from the transportation of used filters at disposal sites and generate solid waste. Therefore, any filtration unit's presumed effectiveness and feasibility should be carefully evaluated in more detail before assuming they will sufficiently alleviate exposure to DPM emissions.

#### *Overlapping Construction and Operational Activities*

Because there is the potential that construction and operation activities may overlap for the Proposed Project, the Lead Agency quantified the worse-case emission scenario that may occur from such an overlap (peak 2025 construction emissions and phase 2 operational emissions).<sup>36</sup> The Lead Agency did not, however, take the additional step of comparing the overlapping emissions to South Coast AQMD's regional air quality CEQA *operational* thresholds to determine their level of significance. South Coast AQMD staff therefore recommends that the Lead Agency revise the air quality analysis section to consider and analyze the overlapping construction and operation emissions. Overlapping emissions should be compared to South Coast AQMD's regional air quality CEQA operational thresholds to determine their level of significance, which should be included in the Final EIR. If the overlapped emissions analysis is not included in the Final EIR, the Lead Agency should provide reasons for not having them supported by substantial evidence in the record.

#### *South Coast AQMD Rules, Permits, and Responsible Agency*

As stated in the Draft EIR, the South Coast AQMD is a responsible agency that will issue permits that allow for the construction and operation of the Proposed Project.<sup>37</sup> The Lead Agency should therefore include a discussion in the Final EIR on stationary equipment (such as boilers, heaters, ovens, emergency generators, fire water pumps, etc.) which would be utilized in the Proposed Project's construction and operation that require South Coast AQMD permits. Assumptions for the stationary sources in the Final EIR will also be used as the basis for the

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<sup>35</sup> South Coast AQMD, Pilot Study of High-Performance Air Filtration for Classrooms Applications, Draft Report: October 2009, <http://www.aqmd.gov/docs/default-source/ceqa/handbook/aqmdpilotstudyfinalreport.pdf>. Also, see the 2012 Peer Review Journal article by South Coast AQMD: <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/ina.12013>.

<sup>36</sup> Draft EIR. 4.3 Air Quality. Pages 4.3-41.

<sup>37</sup> Draft EIR. 2.0 Introduction and Purpose. Page 2-9.

permit conditions and limits for the Proposed Project. Please contact South Coast AQMD's Engineering and Permitting staff at (909) 396-3385 for questions on permits. For more general information on permits, please visit South Coast AQMD's webpage at: <http://www.aqmd.gov/home/permits>.

### Conclusion

Pursuant to California Public Resources Code Section 21092.5(a) and CEQA Guidelines Section 15088(b), South Coast AQMD staff requests that the Lead Agency provide South Coast AQMD staff with written responses to all comments contained herein prior to the certification of the Final EIR. In addition, issues raised in the comments should be addressed in detail giving reasons why specific comments and suggestions are not accepted. There should be good faith, reasoned analysis in response. Conclusory statements unsupported by factual information will not suffice (CEQA Guidelines Section 15088(c)). Conclusory statements do not facilitate the purpose and goal of CEQA on public disclosure and are not meaningful, informative, or useful to decision makers and to the public who are interested in the Proposed Project.

South Coast AQMD staff is available to work with the Lead Agency to address any air quality questions that may arise from this comment letter. Please contact Evelyn Aguilar, Air Quality Specialist, at [eaguilar@aqmd.gov](mailto:eaguilar@aqmd.gov) should you have any questions.

Sincerely,

*Sam Wang*

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