

Chapter 22: Short-term Uses versus Long-term Productivity

22.1 Regulatory Setting

The Council on Environmental Quality's (CEQ) regulations for implementing the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) require an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) to address the relationship between short-term uses of the environment and the maintenance and enhancement of long-term productivity (40 Code of Federal Regulations [CFR] Section 1502.16). The Federal Highway Administration's (FHWA) guidelines for environmental documents state that an EIS should discuss in general terms the proposed action's relationship of local short-term impacts and use of resources, and the maintenance and enhancement of long-term productivity, including recognition that transportation improvements are based on state and/or local planning that considers the need for present and future traffic requirements within the context of present and future land use development (FHWA 1987).

CEQ's NEPA regulations require an EIS to address any irreversible or irretrievable commitments of resources that would be involved in the proposed action if it is implemented (40 CFR Section 1502.16). FHWA's guidelines for environmental documents state that an EIS should discuss in general terms the proposed action's irreversible and irretrievable commitment of resources, including whether the action alternatives might require a similar commitment of natural, physical, human, and fiscal resources (FHWA 1987).

22.2 Short-term Uses versus Long-term Productivity

The local short-term impacts and uses of resources associated with the action alternatives can be compared to the maintenance and enhancement of the long-term productivity for the area. Because the area adjacent to State Route (S.R.) 210 in the Salt Lake Valley is mostly developed or has been affected by past development, the action alternatives would not alter the long-term productivity of the area's natural resources.

The action alternatives would remove some natural resources in Little Cottonwood Canyon, and this removal could be considered an irreversible and irretrievable commitment of resources. The amount of wildlife habitat that would be removed by each action alternative including supporting elements (trailhead parking and avalanche mitigation) would be 13 acres with the Enhanced Bus Service Alternative, 37 acres with the Enhanced Bus Service in Peak-period Shoulder Lane Alternative, 17 acres with the gondola alternatives, and 78 acres with the Cog Rail Alternative. The effects of the loss of these resources are described in Chapter 13, Ecosystem Resources.

In general, the short-term use of the forest in Little Cottonwood Canyon by the action alternatives would be a negative impact to the long-term productivity of the land as a natural resource. Forest outside the area converted to project use would remain in conservation or recreation use, and the action alternatives would not alter the long-term productivity of those areas.

The S.R. 210 Project would be consistent with transportation plans and would support regional projections of increases in population. The project would improve the long-term productivity of the area by addressing the transportation needs on S.R. 210.

22.3 References

[FHWA] Federal Highway Administration

1987 Guidance for Preparing and Processing Environmental and Section 4(f) Documents. October.