

5.0 ALTERNATIVES TO THE PROJECT

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of the EIR alternatives analysis is to describe a range of reasonable alternatives to the proposed project. Section 15126.6 of the *State CEQA Guidelines* requires that an EIR describe a range of reasonable alternatives to the proposed project that would feasibly attain most of the basic project objectives and avoid or substantially lessen any significant effects of the project. The guidelines indicate several factors to be considered in determining the range of alternatives to be analyzed in an EIR and the level of analytical detail that should be provided for each alternative. These factors include (1) the nature of the significant impacts of the proposed project, (2) the ability of alternatives to avoid or lessen the significant impacts associated with the project, (3) the ability of the alternatives to meet the objectives of the project, and (4) the feasibility of the alternatives. These factors would be unique for each project. Alternatives may be eliminated from detailed analysis in the EIR if they fail to meet the most basic of project objectives, are determined to be infeasible, or cannot be demonstrated to avoid or lessen significant environmental impacts.

Section 4.0, Environmental Impact Analysis, of this EIR summarizes the environmental analyses conducted for the proposed project across a wide range of environmental parameters. The analyses concluded that the proposed project would cause a number of potentially significant environmental impacts, and that those potential impacts could be mitigated to less than significant levels. The analyses also concluded that the proposed project would cause a number of significant environmental impacts, and that those potential impacts could not be feasibly mitigated to less than significant levels.

The purpose of the analysis of project alternatives is to explore alternatives that could eliminate or lessen the potential environmental impacts associated with the proposed project.

Potentially significant yet mitigable impacts and significant and unavoidable impacts were identified for the following environmental parameters:

- Aesthetics
- Air Quality
- Biological Resources
- Cultural Resources
- Geology, Soils, and Seismicity
- Hazards and Hazardous Materials
- Hydrology and Water Quality
- Land Use and Planning
- Noise
- Public Services
- Transportation and Traffic
- Utilities and Service Systems

All of the proposed project's potential impacts, with the exception of certain aesthetic, air quality, land use and planning, and transportation and traffic impacts can be mitigated to less than significant levels as presented in **Section 4.0, Environmental Impact Analysis**. Those potentially significant impacts for certain aesthetic, air quality, land use and planning, and transportation and traffic impacts cannot be fully mitigated, and are considered unavoidable impacts.

The alternative projects analyzed in this EIR were selected for their potential to generate fewer impacts or require lesser levels of mitigation while fulfilling the proposed project's defined objective as stated in **Section 3.0, Project Description**:

- To allow for the continued use of the Altamont Motorsports Park in accordance with all provisions of the 1996 CUP.
- To further define all conditions of the 1996 CUP, including specification of the types of motorsports activities permitted at Altamont Motorsports Park, in a manner that recognizes the evolving nature of the motorsports industry and allows a variety of racing types, including, but not limited to, stockcar, autocross, kart, motorcycle, sports car, open-wheel, and drifting, as well as future, unanticipated motorsports activities.
- To permit the construction of the previously approved grandstand roof over a portion of the existing grandstand.
- To permit the installation of the previously approved two mobile homes for use as caretaker residences.
- To provide signage adequate to alert passersby of the location and schedule of events at Altamont Motorsports Park, and to provide advertising and public service announcements.

Three types of alternatives were considered within the evaluation of project alternatives:

- No Project
- Off-Site Alternative
- On-Site Variations

5.2 NO PROJECT

Consideration of a "No Project" alternative is required by CEQA (See Section 15126.6(e)). CEQA requires evaluation of the impacts that might occur if the project site is left in its present condition, as well as what may be reasonably expected to occur in the foreseeable future if the project were not approved, based on current plans and consistent with available infrastructure and community services.

5.2.1 No Project - 1996 Conditional Use Permit

For the proposed project two potential “No Project” alternatives are possible. One No Project (No Project – 1996 Conditional Use Permit) would retain the status quo as defined by the 1996 Conditional Use Permit, and operation of the raceway in accordance with that entitlement would continue as currently permitted. None of the potentially significant and mitigable or significant and unavoidable impacts identified in **Section 4.0, Environmental Impact Analysis**, would occur with the No Project – 1996 Conditional Use Permit Alternative.

5.2.2 No Project – Raceway Closure

A second “No Project” alternative (No Project – Raceway Closure) would be the closure of the raceway in total. This No Project alternative would stop all activity at the site and would concurrently eliminate any existing operational effects associated with the raceway. The No Project – Raceway Closure would also be expected to result over time in the degradation of the existing raceway facilities, which would be minimally visible from most off-site locations. The limited visibility of degraded raceway facilities would not be considered a potentially significant impact. Degradation of the facility overtime could, due to lack of maintenance, increase the potential for wildland fires due to lack of vegetation removal or result in contamination of groundwaters from leaks of any hazardous materials stored on site. However, there are adequate regulatory controls in place to ensure that neither of those potential conditions/impacts would occur. This is not considered a potential impact.

5.3 ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

The *State CEQA Guidelines* (Section 15126.6(c)) permit the elimination of alternatives from detailed consideration if

- they fail to meet the most basic of project objectives,
- they are infeasible, or
- they would not avoid or lessen significant environmental impacts.

5.3.1 Off-Site Alternative

The proposed rezoning is designed to, among others, “...allow for the continued use of the Altamont Motorsports Park in accordance with all provisions of the 1996 CUP.” Any off-site alternative would not meet the most basic project objective inasmuch as AMP is an existing, fully operational facility.

5.4 ALTERNATIVES

5.4.1 Reduced/Eliminated Freeway Signs

Section 4.1, Aesthetics, outlines the significant and unavoidable impact associated with the proposed freeway signs due to their intrusion into the view shed from the portion of Interstate 580 that is a designated state scenic highway. The elimination of the proposed signs or the substantial reduction of their size and height would eliminate or alternatively reduce the significance of those impacts to a less than significant level. However, reduction of the signs' size and height to a point where they would not intrude into the view shed would eliminate their usefulness and not satisfy the signs' purpose to advertise the raceway to passing motorists. However, the basic objective of the proposed project is "to allow for the continued use of the Altamont Motorsports Park in accordance with all provisions of the 1996 CUP." However, another objective of the proposed project is to construct the signs to provide signage adequate to alert passersby of the location and schedule of events at Altamont Motorsports Park, and to provide advertising and public service announcements. This alternative would not satisfy that objective.

5.4.2 Reduce Noise Standard

The 1996 CUP established a noise standard for the raceway (maximum sound level per vehicle of 95 dB(A) 100 feet from the track) which remains the standard for the proposed project as described in **Section 4.11, Noise**. The Board of Supervisors has recently implemented an interim noise standard for the 2008 racing season that establishes a cumulative maximum sound level of 83 dB(A) at the property line for all race vehicles on track at any time. This interim standard was established for the 2008 racing season at a hearing of the Board to consider revocation of the 1996 CUP.

The nearest property line to the edge of the race track is approximately 100 feet from the south end of the raceway (turns 1 and 2). The ability to establish the lower interim standard stems from new exhaust system/muffler technology that reduces the exhaust noise. The raceway has implemented a requirement for the current racing season that mandates the use of the exhaust system/muffler technology on all race vehicles. The County has commissioned a noise study to assess the actual use of the technology, and the final results of that study are not yet available.

There are some types of race vehicles that have historically been run at the raceway in accordance with the 1996 CUP for which the new exhaust system/muffler technology is not compatible. In those instances, if the County were to make the interim standard permanent, those types of race vehicles would have to be excluded from running at the raceway, and the raceway could not host events with those race vehicles, until such time as the exhaust system/muffler technology was made compatible. Alternatively, the County could

have to establish a limitation on the number of times such vehicles could be run at the raceway or alternatively require a case-by-case permit for such events.

5.5 SUMMARY OF ALTERNATIVES

Table 5.0-1, Summary of Impacts and Significance, presents a summary of impacts and impact levels for the proposed project and each of the alternatives.

Table 5.0-1
Summary of Impacts and Significance

Environmental Parameter	Proposed Project	No Project – 1996 Conditional Use Permit	No Project – Raceway Closure	Reduced/ Eliminated Freeway Signs	Reduced Noise Standard
Aesthetics	X	○	□	○	X
Agricultural Resources	○	○	○	○	○
Air Quality	X	○	○	X	X
Biological Resources	■	○	○	■	■
Cultural Resources	■	○	○	■	■
Geology, Soils, and Seismicity	■	○	○	■	■
Hazards and Hazardous Materials	■	○	○	■	■
Hydrology and Water Quality	■	○	○	■	■
Land Use and Planning	X	○	○	○	X
Mineral Resources	○	○	○	○	○
Noise	■	○	○	■	■
Population and Housing	○	○	○	○	○
Public Services	■	○	○	■	■
Recreation	○	○	○	○	○
Transportation and Traffic	■	○	○	■	■
Utilities and Service Systems	■	○	○	■	■

X = Potentially significant and not mitigable (to less than significant)

■ = Potentially significant but mitigable (to less than significant)

□ = Less than significant impact

○ = No impact or equivalent impact

5.6 ENVIRONMENTALLY SUPERIOR ALTERNATIVE

CEQA requires identification of an environmentally superior alternative from among the proposed project and the alternatives evaluated. The No Project – 1996 Conditional Use Permit alternative would retain the existing conditions, which would allow the raceway to continue to operate in accordance with provisions of the 1996 CUP. The No Project – Raceway Closure alternative would be expected to result in gradual deterioration of the facility over time, with a less than significant impact on aesthetics. Each of the two potential alternatives (Reduced/Eliminated Freeway Signs and Reduced Noise Standards) would individually address one significant effect (aesthetics as described in **Section 4.1, Aesthetics**) and one another improved but not significant effect (noise as discussed above).

The combination of both the Reduced/Eliminated Freeway Signs and Reduced Noise Standards alternatives into a single alternative would reflect the environmentally superior alternative.