

TRAFFIC IMPACT STUDIES

WHY ARE TRAFFIC IMPACT STUDIES PREPARED?



A Traffic impact study describes how a development project would affect the City of La Quinta's local transportation system. A study can be prepared for

any type of development such as residential, institutional, commercial, office, industrial or mixed-use project. A traffic impact study usually needs to be submitted by a developer before or concurrent with land use permits, zoning changes, subdivision maps, or site plan are approved.

Studies may also be required for General Plan Amendments, Annexations and other actions that may ultimately have Traffic impacts. The City requires Traffic impact studies to be prepared if the thresholds established in Engineering Bulletin EB 06-13 or in any subsequent policies adopted by City Council are met.

WHEN SHOULD TRAFFIC IMPACT STUDIES BE PREPARED?

Traffic impact studies are usually prepared as part of the City's environmental review process, through which all new development projects have to be cleared. A developer may choose to prepare a study in advance of submitting a project to the City, particularly if there is a need to identify potential impacts that may be difficult to mitigate.

WHO PREPARES TRAFFIC IMPACT STUDIES?

All Traffic impact studies are to be completed under the supervision of a licensed and experienced traffic or transportation engineer. The City of La Quinta can provide developers with lists of consulting firms or individuals who have prepared these kinds of studies for other similar projects.

The initial meeting discussions between the applicant and the City should also include:

- A graphic illustration of the boundaries of the study area for the study.



- The source and accuracy of existing data available for preparing the Traffic impact study such as average daily and peak hour traffic counts and geometrics of existing streets.
- The intersections and streets to be included in a detailed analysis of the transportation impacts.
- The methodology to be used for calculating the average daily and peak hour traffic to be generated by the new project.
- The assumptions used to distribute the projected traffic onto the existing and proposed transportation system.
- The method to be used for calculating levels of service for intersections and street segments.
- If the project requires a modification to the General Plan, the method the

applicant will use to update the build out volumes established by the Traffic Impact Analysis prepared for the General Plan Update EIR.

WHAT INFORMATION SHOULD A TRAFFIC IMPACT STUDY CONTAIN?

A traffic impact study that accurately documents the impacts of a new development should contain the following information:

- A description of the land uses in the proposed development and any known proposed land uses for vacant or redeveloping property in the surrounding area.
- A precise description of the existing transportation system and its existing capabilities to meet area demands. This description usually includes a discussion on traffic flow and circulation issues specific to the study area.



- An estimate of the additional total daily and peak hour traffic anticipated to be generated by the new development and by the uses that may be proposed for vacant or redeveloping land in the area for assessing cumulative impacts. Regional traffic growth should also be addressed.
- Distribution of the daily traffic and peak hour traffic onto the existing transportation system that would be added by the development project.
- Identifying mitigation measures such as reducing the size or changing the scope of the proposed development project, new streets, wider streets, transportation

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demand management strategies, additional turning lanes, traffic signals, sidewalks, and transit facilities.

- An assessment of the measures needed to mitigate the impact of the proposed development in combination with other future development anticipated in the impact area in addition to those identified by the Traffic Impact Analysis prepared for the General Plan Update EIR.
- For development projects that may have impacts outside the jurisdiction where they are located, the analysis should be coordinated with other affected jurisdictions.
- How on-site circulation analysis for shopping centers and mixed-use development will provide access to loading docks and the storage lane required for drive through facilities.

WHAT ISSUES DOES A TRAFFIC IMPACT STUDY NEED TO ADDRESS?

Once a firm has been hired, it is important that a meeting be held involving City staff, the developer, and the professional preparing the traffic impact study to determine issues that need to be addressed which would include the following:

- What are the improvements needed to serve the traffic generated by the new development, how much will the improvements cost and who will pay for them?
- Will the new project impact traffic on any existing arterial streets and how will those impacts be mitigated? Will speed change lanes be needed at the driveways?

- Will the new development aggravate any existing safety hazards or create new ones and, if so, how can those hazards be corrected?
- Can the proposed development be served by public transportation and does the design encourage ridesharing as well as pedestrian and bicycle activity?
- Is the on-site parking sufficient or is there an opportunity to share parking with other adjacent uses?
- The number of driveways needed, the driveway design including the length of throat that is clear of parking stalls and other cross aisle traffic.
- If any driveway is to be signalized, can on-site circulation handle the traffic queue while queuing for the signal?

A traffic impact study should identify mitigation measures to mitigate all impacts to a less than significant level. The study should also identify enforceable means to ensure the mitigation measures will be accomplished, the funding sources and the time schedule for their timely completion, as well as the responsibility for monitoring their implementation.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ON TRAFFIC IMPACT STUDIES

If you have questions, requests or suggestions concerning traffic impact studies, please call the Public Works Department at: