6 ALTERNATIVES ANALYSIS

6.1 INTRODUCTION

The primary intent of the alternatives analysis in an EIR, as stated in §15126.6(a) of the State CEQA Guidelines, is to "describe a range of reasonable alternatives to the project, or to the location of the project, which would feasibly attain most of the basic objectives of the project but would avoid or substantially lessen any of the significant effects of the project, and evaluate the comparative merits of the alternatives." Further, the State CEQA Guidelines state that "the discussion of alternatives shall focus on alternatives to the project or its location which are capable of avoiding or substantially lessening any significant effects of the project, even if these alternatives would impede to some degree the attainment of the project objectives, or would be more costly" (Guidelines §15126.6(b)). An EIR must describe a range of reasonable alternatives to the proposed project that could feasibly attain most of the basic objectives of the project. The feasibility of an alternative may be determined based on a variety of factors, including but not limited to economic viability, availability of infrastructure, and other plans or regulatory limitations (Guidelines §15126.6(f)(1)).

6.2 PROJECT OBJECTIVES

As indicated above, the choice of alternatives is guided primarily by the need to both reduce or eliminate significant impacts and to achieve project objectives. As stated in Chapter 3, Description of the Equal-Weight Project Alternatives, the project objectives established by the County are:

1. Maintenance of the County's natural beauty and environmental quality (wildlife and vegetation, air and water quality, cultural resources, and rural character).
2. A strong economy sustaining each community, supported by agriculture, resource extraction, tourism, research and development, and services.
3. Development occurring in distinct communities, separated by open-space and resource areas.
4. Availability of sufficient public services and utilities concurrent with development to meet the needs of county residents and businesses.
5. A safe, efficient, and effective transportation system.
6. A jobs/housing balance, particularly the provision of affordable housing for people working in El Dorado County.
7. Sufficient park and recreation facilities throughout the County.

6.3 COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF ALTERNATIVES

Twelve alternatives were identified by the County for examination and analysis in this EIR. The alternatives considered in the EIR are:

- Alternative #1: No Project (see Chapter 5)
- Alternative #2: Roadway Constrained 6-Lane "Plus" (see Chapter 5)
- Alternative #3: Environmentally Constrained (see Chapter 5)
- Alternative #4: 1996 General Plan (see Chapter 5)
- Alternative #5: 2001 Project Description
- Alternative #6: Roadway Constrained Six-Lane
- Alternative #7: Roadway Constrained Eight-Lane
- Alternative #8: Modified Development Agreements
- Alternative #9: Modified El Dorado Hills Development South of U.S. 50
- Alternative #10: New White Rock Road Connection
- Alternative #11: Transit Emphasis
- Alternative #12: Compact Development

Alternatives #1 through #4 were identified for equal-weight analysis in this EIR (see Chapter 5) and are described in detail in Chapter 3, Description of the Equal-Weight Project Alternatives, and Chapter 4, Land Use Forecasts and Development Estimates. This equivalent level of alternatives analysis provides greater detail than required by CEQA, but it has been determined to be desirable to provide the Board of Supervisors with a full range of options for decisionmaking and to address public concerns. Alternatives #1 through #4 are not discussed further in this section. The remaining eight alternatives were considered, but excluded from the equal-weight analysis. These alternatives are examined at a lesser level of detail in this chapter, as allowed by CEQA.

There are many potential General Plan alternatives that could be considered for implementation by the Board of Supervisors. They may vary based on different configurations of proposed land uses (i.e., land use maps), economic forecasts, and proposed policies. Analysis of every possible alternative is infeasible and would be redundant. Furthermore, CEQA does not require that every alternative be considered. Chapter 5 considers a broad range of possible alternative development levels, from No Project (smallest number of housing units that could be permitted) to 1996 General Plan (largest number of housing units that could be permitted). This chapter describes the reasonable range of alternatives that were developed by the County during the planning process for the EIR.

The alternatives presented below have undergone varied levels of analysis, depending on their potential feasibility and ability to reduce significant effects. The 2001 Project Description Alternative was included in the land use forecast process and received full traffic analysis. Land use maps and policy sets were also developed for this alternative. Some alternatives have been subjected to preliminary traffic modeling to provide insight into their feasibility and effectiveness, while other alternatives are theoretical concepts that were considered in the planning process and qualitatively evaluated in this alternatives analysis. Two of the eight alternatives were determined to be legally infeasible; they did not receive comparative analysis in this section. A less detailed comparative analysis is presented in this section for the remaining six alternatives.

6.3.1 Alternatives Considered and Eliminated from Further Analysis

Consistent with CEQA, primary consideration was given to alternatives that could reduce significant impacts, while still meeting most of the project objectives. All alternatives were subjected to a preliminary feasibility analysis. Two of the alternatives were rejected as infeasible as a result of this review and eliminated from further consideration. These alternatives—Alternative #6: Roadway Constrained Six-Lane and Alternative #8: Modified Development Agreements—are described below.

Alternative #6: Roadway Constrained Six-lane

The primary assumption underlying this alternative is that U.S. 50 remains six lanes through the planning horizon. A level of service (LOS) policy that generally sets LOS D for rural areas and LOS E for community centers and for U.S. 50 west of Placerville is used for this alternative. Because of the limited improvements and LOS thresholds for U.S. 50, the residential capacity under this alternative would be approximately 14,000 to 15,000 housing units. No additional residential units could be accommodated under this alternative, beyond the existing commitments (units already vested by subdivision maps and development agreements [DAs]). Nonresidential growth assumed as a part of this alternative includes the El Dorado Hills Business Park and Phase I of the Missouri Flat Master Circulation and Financing Plan. Preliminary traffic analysis was conducted for the 2025 scenario (see Appendix D). These results showed that acceptable 2025 LOS could be provided except for one segment of U.S. 50 projected to operate at LOS F. No land use map or policy set was developed for this alternative.

This alternative would require policies that preclude development in the county beyond the 14,000- to 15,000-housing-unit capacity of the planned roadways. The number of units for which there are existing vested commitments (units covered under approved DAs or tentative

subdivision maps) is approximately the same number (14,565 dwelling units). Because this alternative would essentially preclude any additional development throughout most of the county, including development of single homes on existing legal parcels, this alternative is considered legally infeasible.

If it were feasible to implement this alternative, vehicle trip generation would be substantially less than under any of the four equal-weight alternatives; therefore, traffic impacts would be reduced substantially. Also, other environmental effects related to development of natural habitats and agricultural areas would be reduced.

Assuming that the DA and tentative subdivision map units proceed, land use designations on all other properties under this alternative would need to be revised to preclude additional development. Individual residential parcels would no longer be allowed to develop a single unit as a matter of right. Another approach to limiting future residential development under this alternative could conceivably include altering existing, executed development agreements and approved subdivision maps; however, this would not be possible without the agreement of the developers because these are legally vested commitments. This alternative would have serious potential legal and economic implications that make it infeasible. Therefore, it was eliminated from further alternatives analysis in this EIR.

ALTERNATIVE #8: MODIFIED DEVELOPMENT AGREEMENTS

This alternative would establish new land use designations and policies for lands in the county that are currently the subject of DAs. These development areas include Serrano, Bass Lake, Marble Valley, Promontory, Carson Creek, and Valley View. This would remove a significant constraint on the current planning process and could allow the county to achieve modified development configurations by changing the permitted intensity of density of development to reduce environmental effects. These DAs, approved before the Writ of Mandate was issued, authorized development of 11,308 units in the county pursuant to specific plans and subdivision maps referenced by those agreements. Of these, 10,639 remained unbuilt as of 1999. The unbuilt housing units represent 50% of the additional development contemplated by 2025 under the No Project Alternative and 33% of the additional development expected by 2025 under the 1996 General Plan Alternative. Because this is a significant portion of the additional development expected to occur in the county over the planning horizon, changing the number of units allowed or changing the development patterns and policies set forth in the various specific plans could conceivably reduce to a significant degree the environmental impacts associated with future development. For instance, a decrease in units allowed could commensurately reduce traffic and related environmental impacts.

After initial consideration, this alternative was eliminated as legally infeasible. Because the DAs grant the landowners a vested right to proceed with development, the County cannot require that they be modified in ways that would change the density or intensity of development without compensation or mutual agreement by the developers. When the DAs were executed, development was approved in accordance with the General Plan policies and other County regulations in effect at the time. Without the legal ability to modify the DAs to reflect a new policy set and land use map, this alternative is not feasible. Therefore, it was eliminated from the comparative alternatives analysis in this EIR.

6.3.2 ALTERNATIVES ANALYZED IN THIS CHAPTER

The six remaining alternatives that are comparatively analyzed in this chapter are:

- Alternative #5: 2001 Project Description
- Alternative #7: Roadway Constrained Eight-Lane
- Alternative #9: Modified El Dorado Hills Development South of U.S. 50
- Alternative #10: New White Rock Road Connection
- Alternative #11: Transit Emphasis
- Alternative #12: Compact Development

In the discussion of these comparative alternatives, there is an evaluation of the alternative in relation to the project objectives and an analysis of environmental impacts. The environmental analysis is relative in nature; it compares the alternatives to the No Project (Writ Constrained) Alternative in the context of the environmental topics evaluated in Chapter 5 of this EIR. The comparison of alternatives assumes that no mitigation measures are implemented. For each resource area evaluated in this EIR, Table 6-1 indicates whether the impacts of the comparative alternatives would be more or less severe than those of the No Project Alternative. The comparative analysis is focused primarily on impacts that would occur during the General Plan's planning horizon (2025).

ALTERNATIVE #5: 2001 PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The 2001 Project Description alternative is so-named because initially, at the time the NOP was released (August 6, 2001), it was the County's preferred alternative. It was thought to represent a more moderate growth scenario than that presented by the 1996 General Plan. It is based in large part on the prior 1994 General Plan alternative modified to reflect: (1) Measure Y, projects approved in the County between the 1996 General Plan adoption and the 1999 Writ; and (2) direction from the Board of Supervisors. As such, it is the most developed of the comparative alternatives analyzed in this EIR. It includes a Statement of Vision, Plan

Strategies, Plan Concepts, and Principles and Goals, as spelled out in the August 6, 2001, NOP contained in Appendix A. A land use map, land use forecasts, and traffic analysis for this alternative were prepared and are provided in Appendix B and Appendix D.

Table 6-1
Effects of the Comparative Alternatives in Relation to the No Project Alternative [1, 2]

Resource	Alt. 2	Alt. 3	Alt. 4	Alt. 5	Alt. 7	Alt. 9	Alt. 10	Alt. 11	Alt. 12
Land Use and Housing (Section 5.1)	—	~	—	—	.	~	~	~	~
Agriculture and Forestry (Section 5.2)	—	~	—	—	.	.	.	~	~
Visual Resources (Section 5.3)	—	—	—	—	~	~	—	~	~
Traffic and Circulation (Section 5.4)	—	—	—	—	~	~	~	—	~
Water Resources—Supply (Section 5.5-1)	—	—	—	—	.	~	.	—	—
Water Resources—Wastewater (Section 5.5-2)	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Water Resources—Water Quality (Section 5.5-3)	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Utilities (Section 5.6)	—	—	—	—	.	.	.	—	~
Public Services (Section 5.7)	—	—	—	—	.	.	.	—	~
Human Health and Safety (Section 5.8)	—	—	—	—	.	.	.	—	.
Geology, Soils, and Mineral Resources (Section 5.9)	~	~	—	—	.	.	.	~	~
Noise (Section 5.10)	~	~	—	—	.	.	~	—	—
Air Quality (Section 5.11)	—	—	—	—	—	~	~	—	~
Biological Resources (Section 5.12)	~	~	—	—	~	~	—	~	~
Cultural Resources (Section 5.13)	~	~	—	—	.	~	—	~	~
Lake Tahoe Basin (Section 5.14)	.	—	—	—	.	.	.	.	.

— More Severe (worse) ~ Less Severe . Approximately equal

[1] Relative to No Project conditions through 2025 (before mitigation)

[2] Alternatives 6 and 8 were not included in this table because they were determined to be legally infeasible.

All lands for which there are approved DAs and tentative subdivision maps are assumed to develop as planned. Nonresidential property is assumed to develop based on market forces, proportional to housing growth. A LOS policy, which generally sets LOS D for rural areas and LOS E for community centers, is used for this alternative. U.S. 50 would be widened as necessary to provide acceptable LOS.

Differences associated with this alternative, as compared to the 1996 General Plan involved changes to the Rural Residential and Low Density Residential density ranges, and related changes to the land use map. Low Density Residential was changed from a range of 5-10 acres per dwelling to 5-20 acres per dwelling unit. Rural Residential became a 20-acre minimum instead of 10-160 acres, and a new "Rural Residential-Low Density" designation was created with a 40-acre minimum. However, large areas of the Rural Regions designated as Rural Residential on the land use map were changed to Low Density Residential on the 2001 alternative land use map. The size of the Community Regions and Rural Centers was also reduced, which effectively increased development in the Rural Regions and exacerbated rural sprawl.

A land use map and goals and objectives were prepared for this alternative, and land use forecasts and traffic modeling were completed (Exhibit 6-1). By 2025, 32,158 new housing units and 41,880 new jobs are projected. At buildout, 73,814 new housing units and 76,836 new jobs could be accommodated. The results of the land use forecasts and traffic modeling efforts for this alternative closely resemble those of the 1996 General Plan Alternative, which is subject to detailed equal-weight analysis in the EIR. After further consideration, it was determined there would be no meaningful environmental distinction between the 1996 General Plan Alternative and this alternative. Because further analysis of this alternative would be duplicative, it was excluded from equal-weight analysis in Chapter 5.

Relationship to the Project Objectives

This alternative would generally meet all of the project objectives. Goals and objectives, which coincide with stated objectives of the project, have been developed for this alternative.

Environmental Effects

As stated above, the environmental effects of this alternative would be similar to the effects described for the 1996 General Plan Alternative in Chapter 5 of this EIR. The environmental effects of this alternative would generally be worse than those of the No Project Alternative, because considerably more development and population would be expected. This would affect more resources associated with the land and generate additional traffic and demand for

services and water. The exception would be for land use and housing issues, where this alternative would encourage less dispersed development by allowing development in subdivisions, rather than the restriction in the No Project Alternative that could lead to more widely dispersed housing units as single houses on existing individual parcels. However, because the ability to subdivide in the Rural Regions exists with this alternative, significantly more rural lots could be created.

Where the effects of this alternative are essentially the same as those of the 1996 General Plan Alternative, they are not repeated below. Instead, cross-references to the appropriate section of the EIR are provided.

Land Use and Housing

Under the 2001 Project Description Alternative, contiguous community region boundaries in several communities would create an undifferentiated swath of development that would likely lead to a loss of community character for Rescue, Cameron Park, Shingle Springs, Diamond Springs, and Placerville. Although the No Project Alternative would disperse development, density would be much lower than this alternative and would not lead to this extent of undifferentiation. Therefore, this alternative has more severe impacts.

The 2001 Project Description Alternative includes agricultural activities in the definition of Medium-Density Residential and lacks a consistent means of addressing sensitive land uses, thus contributing to the potential for development patterns to create substantial land use incompatibility. Potential land use incompatibilities would occur with the No Project Alternative, but at its lower intensity of land uses, the potential would not be as severe. Therefore, this alternative has more severe impacts than the No Project Alternative.

Agriculture and Forestry

Development would be more intense with this alternative, creating the potential for more conflicts between with urban and agricultural land uses. This alternative would result in greater impacts on agricultural and forest resources compared to those of the No Project Alternative because this action allows subdivisions in rural regions.

Visual Resources

This alternative would concentrate development in the Community Regions and Rural Centers more than the No Project Alternative; however, the overall amount of development would be greater and more urban in character throughout the county.

Exhibit 6-1

GP PU Map: 2001 GP (Alternative)

FOLD OUT

COLOR

Exhibit 6-1

GP PU Map: 2001 GP (Alternative)

FOLD OUT

COLOR

back of page

Traffic and Circulation

This alternative would have impacts that are similar to the 1996 General Plan Alternative. The 1996 General Plan Alternative has a total of three segments on White Rock Road and Latrobe Road that would operate at LOS F in 2025 with the circulation diagram improvements assumed in placed. The 2001 Project Description would also have LOS F operations in 2025 for these same segments and one additional segment on White Rock Road. Traffic impacts would be more severe than under the No Project Alternative.

Water Resources

Supply

Forecasted growth would be higher under the 2001 Project Description Alternative than under the No Project Alternative and would result in a higher demand for water because a larger population would need to be served. There would be greater impacts to groundwater because subdivisions would be allowed in rural regions. There would also be more growth anticipated to be concentrated in Community Regions. Thus, a higher proportion of residents might be supplied by local water purveyors, thereby reducing dependence on groundwater supplies. Therefore, this alternative would result in more severe impacts on water supplies, and the impacts of providing these supplies, than the No Project Alternative.

Wastewater

Public wastewater systems would be available to more people living in the Community Regions but there would be more septic use because of subdivision in rural regions. EID would serve the relatively same level of development (primarily existing commitments). Septic use standards would be followed to the same degree as the No Project Alternative. Impacts would be the same.

Water Quality

The water quality programs in effect for the No Project Alternative would also apply to this alternative. Even though density would be increased over the No Project Alternative, the County has strong water quality improvement/maintenance programs in place to reduce potential water quality impacts of new development to a less-than-significant level. Impacts would be the same.

Utilities

Because this alternative would result in higher development levels than the No Project Alternative, the demand for utilities would be relatively higher. However, the provision of such services would be less problematic because existing infrastructure would likely be in place. Therefore, in the context of utilities, the overall relative impacts of this alternative compared to the No Project Alternative would be similar. Secondary impacts of developing new utilities such as electricity generation plants would be greater because demand would be higher, placing greater need on potential new facilities.

Public Services

The 2001 Project Description Alternative would generate the need for new and physically altered law enforcement, fire protection, and emergency medical facilities, and schools, libraries, and parks. Construction and operation of these facilities would generally not result in significant impacts apart from the impacts of other types of development that are allowed within various land use categories, except related to potential incompatibilities under facility-unique circumstances (e.g., fire station sirens, access to schools, lighting at parks, etc.). New development resulting from the 2001 Project Description Alternative would be expected to increase the demand for public service facilities to a level similar to the 1996 General Plan Alternative, which is higher than the No Project Alternative.

Human Health and Safety

Because more people would live and a similar number would work in El Dorado County compared to the No Project Alternative, this alternative would increase hazardous material generation, potential spills, and potential illegal dumping; expose more people to potential flooding/inundation hazards; expose more asbestos during construction; and increase the incidence of wildfires. Therefore, this alternative would result in more severe human health and safety impacts than the No Project Alternative.

Geology, Soils, and Mineral Resources

The No Project and 2001 Project Description alternatives would allow similar levels of development in important Mineral Resource areas. Even though the development potential of the No Project Alternative would be more limited by the Writ, single dwelling units on parcels would limit mineral resource extraction, particularly under Measure A. The significance of this impact is similar under both alternatives. Land use compatibility issues associated with

mining operations are equally significant for both alternatives because of inadequate buffers and lack of protection for ministerial development.

Landslides and avalanches are more likely to occur in the American River Market Area. Exposure to landslides and avalanches is greater under the 2001 Project Description Alternative than under the No Project Alternative because of higher population projections in this market area.

Noise

Exposure to traffic noise is largely a function of traffic volume and vehicle mix. Based on a comparison of VMT by alternative, the 1996 General Plan Alternative would result in the largest increase in VMT. The 2001 General Plan Alternative would result in very similar but slightly higher VMT even though the population would be slightly lower. The 2001 Project Description Alternative would be similar in significance level to the 1996 General Plan Alternative, which is greater than the No Project Alternative.

Exposure to short-term construction noise is tied closely to the timing and location of individual development projects. Like the No Project Alternative, the 2001 Project Description Alternative would be expected to result in significant and unavoidable short-term construction noise. The high development levels and lack of protective policies associated with the 2001 Project Description Alternative would result in a more severe impact than under the No Project Alternative for exposure to stationary noise sources and exposure to aircraft noise.

Air Quality

The relationship between lower density, dispersed land use patterns and higher VMT has an effect on air quality. Higher VMT would result in more regional mobile source emissions. The 2001 Project Description Alternative would result in slightly worse regional emissions than the 1996 General Plan Alternative, which is more substantial than the No Project Alternative, because the land use map permits low-density development over a greater area. Local mobile source emissions are tied closely to VMT. This alternative would also have higher carbon monoxide (CO) emissions than the No Project Alternative.

Construction emissions are tied closely to the amount of development. The 2001 Project Description Alternative would be expected to result in more construction emissions than the No Project Alternative because more overall development is expected. Toxic air emissions and odorous emissions are tied more closely to the type and location of emitting land uses.

Because development would be more dense than the No Project Alternative and would likely place more people in close proximity to these sources, the impact would be more severe.

Biological Resources

Because of the limitations on subdivisions posed by the Writ, the No Project Alternative would result in less development than the 2001 Project Description Alternative, but it would be distributed throughout the county in a more dispersed development pattern. Although the 2001 Project Description Alternative would permit subdivision and focus development in Community Regions and Rural Centers, the amount of development permitted would also result in high- and medium-intensity land use distributed throughout the county. Increased development under both alternatives would result in impacts on major habitat types and sensitive habitats, impacts on special-status species through removal of habitat, and impacts on wildlife movement through additional barriers to wildlife such as fencing, roadways, and vehicular traffic. The No Project Alternative would result in less development overall. Consequently, the 2001 Project Description Alternative would have more severe impacts than the No Project Alternative.

Cultural Resources

The No Project Alternative would result in less development than the 2001 Project Description Alternative, but it would be distributed throughout the county in a dispersed development pattern. The 2001 Project Description Alternative permits subdivisions and focuses development in Community Regions and Rural Centers; however, the amount of development permitted would also result in development distributed throughout the county. With its higher density of uses, there is a greater risk of adverse effect to cultural resources than the No Project Alternative.

Lake Tahoe Basin

The 2001 Project Description Alternative includes a Tahoe Basin Element with a set of goals pertaining to the natural and social resources in the Lake Tahoe Basin. These goals are identical to the goals in the policy set for the No Project Alternative. However, the land use plan for the 2001 Project Description includes the potential for more development. As a result, this alternative would cause higher levels of traffic on roadways in the basin due to development on the west slope of El Dorado County, the greater potential to for contribution to noise, and greater potential for air quality impacts. Therefore, this alternative is expected to result in a higher level of environmental impact in the Lake Tahoe Basin than the No Project Alternative.

ALTERNATIVE #7: ROADWAY CONSTRAINED EIGHT-LANE

This alternative would allow the maximum amount of growth that could be accommodated within the planned roadway system assuming U.S. 50 is built to eight lanes and assuming a LOS policy that generally sets LOS D for rural areas and LOS E for community centers. This would allow somewhat more congestion on roadways than the 1996 General Plan/No Project LOS policies. All lands covered by an approved DA or tentative subdivision map are assumed to develop as planned. All other residential parcels are assumed to develop with up to one unit. As a part of this alternative, no additional lot splits or new subdivisions are allowed, and nonresidential property is assumed to develop based on market forces, proportional to housing growth (identical to the No Project Alternative at 2025). A preliminary traffic analysis was conducted for the 2025 scenario.

No land use map or policy set has been developed for this alternative. The results of preliminary modeling indicate that this alternative closely resembles the No Project Alternative, which is subject to detailed equal-weight analysis in Chapter 5 of this EIR. Because further analysis of this alternative would be duplicative, it was excluded from equal-weight analysis in this EIR.

Relationship to the Project Objectives

This alternative may not meet all of the project objectives. It would maintain the county's rural character in those areas not covered under DAs (located in western El Dorado County), because growth is limited by restrictions on residential subdivisions. Further, it would allow better utilization of roadway infrastructure by allowing a higher level of congestion before road widening is triggered, and this will better support maintenance of rural character. However, development may become dispersed over a wider area to meet housing demand, because of these same subdivision restrictions as the No Project Alternative, thereby conflicting with the goal of having development occur in distinct communities. In addition, the restriction on subdivisions may also hinder the provision of affordable housing in the county because home prices would likely increase as a result of constraints in housing supply.

Environmental Effects

The only distinction between this alternative and the No Project Alternative is the LOS policy related to traffic congestion. Under the Roadway Constrained Eight-Lane Alternative, somewhat more traffic congestion is allowed based on this policy, indirectly resulting in various environmental effects described below. Otherwise, refer to the impact analysis for the No Project Alternative discussed in Chapter 5 for resource areas not related to traffic.

Land Use and Housing

There are no distinctions between the Roadway Constrained Eight-Lane Alternative and the No Project Alternative in terms of the treatment of land use and housing issues. The projected population, employment, and number of housing units would be the same for both alternatives in 2025 (174,610 population, 66,620 jobs, and 21,434 housing units). The LOS policies associated with this alternative would allow for somewhat more traffic volumes on the county roadway system; however, similar to the No Project Alternative, land use and housing patterns would be constrained by the prohibition on new subdivisions. Therefore, this alternative would result in the same level of land use and housing impacts as the No Project Alternative.

Agriculture and Forestry

There are no differences between this alternative and the No Project alternative with respect to agricultural and forest resources. Therefore, this alternative would result in the same level of impacts on agricultural and forest resources as the No Project Alternative.

Visual Resources

With projections of the same population, employment, and housing supply as the No Project Alternative, the Roadway Constrained Eight-Lane Alternative would also have the same effects on visual resources. The distinction in LOS policy between this alternative and the No Project Alternative could result in fewer road-widening projects and this would be a benefit to visual resources in rural regions. This alternative would result in less of an impact to visual resources than the No Project Alternative.

Traffic and Circulation

Because this alternative assumes that U.S. 50 operates at eight lanes and residential subdivisions are not allowed, the traffic modeling results for this alternative are comparable to the results for the No Project Alternative with two major exceptions. This alternative includes eight lanes on U.S. 50 to Cameron Park Road (the No Project Alternative only includes eight lanes to Cambridge Road) and a new roadway from the El Dorado Hills Business Park to U.S. 50 in Sacramento County. As a result, this alternative provides LOS E or better operations on all major county roadways; whereas, the No Project Alternative has three unacceptable LOS F segments under 2025 conditions. The new roadway connection for the business park is proposed as mitigation for the No Project Alternative, but the feasibility of this new roadway is

unknown. If it is feasible, this alternative would have less severe impacts than the No Project Alternative.

Water Resources—Water Supply, Wastewater, and Water Quality

With projections of the same population, employment, and housing supply as for the No Project Alternative, the Roadway Constrained Eight-Lane Alternative would also have the same effects on water supply, wastewater, and water quality.

Utilities

With projections of the same population, employment, and housing supply as the No Project Alternative, the Roadway Constrained Eight-Lane Alternative would also have the same effects on utilities. The distinction in LOS policy between this alternative and the No Project Alternative would not affect utilities. Therefore, this alternative would result in the same level of impacts on utilities as the No Project Alternative.

Public Services

With projections of the same population, employment, and housing supply as for the No Project Alternative, the Roadway Constrained Eight-Lane Alternative would also have the same effects on public services. Therefore, this alternative would result in the same level of impacts on public services as the No Project Alternative.

Human Health and Safety

With projections of the same population, employment, and housing supply as for the No Project Alternative, health and safety issues related to the Roadway Constrained Eight-Lane Alternative would also be same.

Geology, Soils, and Mineral Resources

With projections of the same population, employment, and housing supply as for the No Project Alternative, the Roadway Constrained Eight-Lane Alternative would also be expected to result in development patterns similar to those of the No Project Alternative. With comparable development patterns, the geology, soils, and mineral resources impacts would also be the same as under the No Project Alternative. The distinction in LOS policy among these two alternatives would not affect these resources. Therefore, this alternative would

result in the same level of impacts on geology, soils, and mineral resources as the No Project Alternative.

Noise

Because the policies for this alternative would allow traffic congestion to reach somewhat worse levels than under the No Project Alternative, there is the potential for slight increases in traffic-generated noise on congested roadways. However, this increase in noise would likely not be sufficient to cause a noticeable difference compared to the No Project Alternative because the total volume of traffic, which would be the same, plays a much more important role in traffic noise than congestion. Other ambient noise levels would be similar to the No Project Alternative as development levels and patterns would be the same. Therefore, this alternative could result in a similar level of noise impacts as the No Project Alternative.

Air Quality

Because the policies for this alternative would allow traffic congestion to increase under the No Project Alternative, there is the potential for relative increases in traffic-generated air emissions on congested roadways. The preliminary traffic model estimated that daily total VMT in 2025 under this alternative would be similar to the No Project Alternative. The contribution of vehicle travel in the county to air pollutants of regional concern (e.g., ozone precursors) would, therefore, also be similar; however, pollutants important in localized concentrations (e.g., CO) could be worsened by increased congestion at already busy intersections. Emissions from homes (wood smoke) for this alternative and the No Project Alternative would be the same . Therefore, on balance, this alternative could result in slightly worse air quality impacts than the No Project Alternative.

Biological Resources

With projections of the same population, employment, and housing supply as for the No Project Alternative, the Roadway Constrained Eight-Lane Alternative would also be expected to result in development patterns similar to those of the No Project Alternative. With comparable development patterns, the biological resources impacts would also be the same as under the No Project Alternative. Biological impacts are not related to traffic congestion, which could be worse under this alternative than under the No Project Alternative. However, with less need for road widening, biological impacts related to road widening would be reduced. Therefore, this alternative would result in slightly less severe impacts on biological resources than the No Project Alternative.

Cultural Resources

With projections of the same population, employment, and housing supply as for the No Project Alternative, the Roadway Constrained Eight-Lane Alternative would also be expected to result in development patterns similar to those of the No Project Alternative. With comparable development patterns, the cultural resources impacts would also be the same as under the No Project Alternative. Impacts on cultural resources are not related to traffic congestion, which could be worse under this alternative than under the No Project Alternative. Therefore, this alternative would result in the same level of impacts on cultural resources as the No Project Alternative.

Lake Tahoe Basin

The Roadway Constrained Eight-Lane Alternative assumes the same policy set and land use plan as the No Project Alternative, which includes a separate Tahoe Basin Element and goals and policies pertaining to resources in the Lake Tahoe Basin. There are no other policies or assumptions under this alternative that deal specifically with the Lake Tahoe Basin. Therefore, this alternative is expected to result in the same level of environmental impacts in the Lake Tahoe Basin as the No Project Alternative.

ALTERNATIVE #9: MODIFIED EL DORADO HILLS DEVELOPMENT SOUTH OF U.S. 50

The focus of this alternative is to examine planned land uses in the El Dorado Hills market area, south of U.S. 50, and to identify land use modifications that could result in a significant reduction in trip generation and improvement in traffic congestion in that area.

This alternative assumes significant modifications of planned land uses including the El Dorado Hills Business Park, the adjoining specific plan areas (Valley View and Carson Creek), and other properties within the market area south of U.S. 50, to the extent that this may be legally possible. The business park is not subject to any vesting mechanisms, such as a DA, but may be affected by bonds sold for financing. The Carson Creek development is vested by an approved DA. The Valley View development is vested by an approved DA, but is subject to a traffic mitigation measure linking development capacity with the availability of adequate roadway infrastructure. The feasibility of this alternative would depend, among other things, on the willingness of the development agreement holder(s) to negotiate changes to the plans vested by the agreements.

Assuming the County's ability to make such changes, the overall goal of this alternative is to have higher density and intensity of land use in a smaller area. This alternative assumes no

change in the total projected number of jobs and dwelling units, but rather a reorganization of land uses to create a better mix that encourages walking and bicycle trips. Class 1 bicycle paths with grade-separated crossings and a shuttle system would be important components. Residential and nonresidential land uses would be balanced to match housing type with salaries. A high level of connectivity would be required.

No land use map or policy set was developed for this alternative, and no land use forecasts or traffic analysis specific to this alternative were completed. Rather, it was recognized that this alternative may be a mitigation option that could apply to the General Plan under several of the identified equal-weight alternatives, to address traffic impacts in a portion of the El Dorado Hills area. Under all of the equal-weight analyses, traffic impacts in this area exceed identified thresholds. The goal of this alternative was to examine land use modifications generally in the El Dorado Hills market area, south of U.S. 50, that would result in a significant reduction in trip ends and improvements in traffic congestion in that area. The concept behind this alternative is to implement a focused, market area-level re-planning of the area to achieve a better balance of types of jobs with type of housing, and to achieve integration between these land uses. If this were successful, significantly lowered traffic congestion and localized air quality improvement could result.

Relationship to the Project Objectives

This alternative would meet all of the project objectives.

Environmental Effects

Land Use and Housing

This alternative would result in different land use patterns compared to the No Project Alternative. Land use intensity and density would increase resulting in more efficient use of land. An increased mix of housing would result, thus improving housing affordability. This alternative would have the potential to better define community regions and rural centers than the No Project Alternative with its dispersed development pattern. Therefore, this alternative would result in a lower impact to land uses and housing than the No Project Alternative.

Agriculture and Forestry

Reductions in land use intensity in the southern El Dorado Hills area under this alternative would not directly affect agricultural and forest resources because such resources are

extremely limited in that area south of U.S. 50. Therefore, this alternative would result in similar impacts on agricultural and forest resources than the No Project Alternative.

Visual Resources

This alternative would result in a decreased area of development, thus maintaining more of the natural environment. Design at the pedestrian scale for walking would improve pedestrian aesthetics. This impact would result in a lower impact to visual resources than the No Project Alternative.

Traffic and Circulation

Under this alternative, pedestrian, bicycle, and transit mobility would improve. Better connections would allow for easier access, particularly for non-vehicular modes of travel. Both the number of vehicle trips and miles of travel would be expected to decrease, by as much as 10 to 15% under optimal land use mixes. LOS along Latrobe Road would be expected to improve from LOS F under the No Project Alternative to LOS E.

Water Resources

Water Supply

Because of the more compact nature of development with this alternative, lots would be smaller and water usage would likely decrease in this area. Water consumption for landscaping would also likely decrease.

Wastewater

A reallocation of land uses may or may not result in a larger area within EID's wastewater treatment plant service area. Irrespective, because the NPDES permit process requires that permitted discharge is protective of beneficial uses of the receiving water, impacts from wastewater treatment expansion would likely not be more severe under this alternative than the No Project Alternative, even if discharges from the Deer Creek and El Dorado Hills wastewater treatment plants are higher than the No Project Alternative. Septic use standards would be followed to the same degree as the No Project Alternative. Impacts would be the same.

Water Quality

The water quality programs in effect for the No Project Alternative would also apply to this alternative. Even though density would be increased over the No Project Alternative, the County has strong water quality improvement/maintenance programs in place to reduce potential water quality impacts of new development to a less-than-significant level. Impacts would be the same.

Utilities

Because of the more compact nature of development, it would be cheaper and be less of an impact to provide infrastructure to this area. Usage would likely stay the same as the No Project Alternative.

Public Services

Because of the more compact nature of development, it would be cheaper and be less of an impact to provide infrastructure to this area. Usage would likely stay the same as the No Project Alternative.

Human Health and Safety

There are limited flood and wildfire hazards in the El Dorado Hills area; therefore, changes in land use intensity in this area would not substantially improve human health and safety conditions. Therefore, this alternative would result in a similar risk of health and safety impacts as the No Project Alternative.

Geology, Soils, and Mineral Resources

The changes in land use associated with this alternative would occur in an area already approved for development. Impacts to geology, soils, and mineral resources would not change. The impact would be the same as under the No Project Alternative.

Noise

The reduction in vehicle trips associated with this alternative would result in lower traffic and therefore less traffic-related noise. The more compact nature of development, however, may result in a concentration of noise sources that causes ambient levels to increase. These

counteracting forces are likely to even each other out, resulting in no net change in noise as compared to the No Project Alternative.

Air Quality

Reductions in localized traffic in the El Dorado Hills area would result in lower air emissions in the immediate area. Therefore, this alternative would result in improved air quality in the El Dorado Hills area. Further, an optimal mix of land uses would lower overall traffic, improving regional air quality compared with the No Project Alternative.

Biological Resources

Under this alternative, more of the natural environment would be retained thus resulting in less impact to biological resources than the No Project Alternative.

Cultural Resources

This alternative would have less impact on the physical environment by increasing the density of development and using less space for development. Potential impacts to unknown subsurface cultural resources would be improved compared to the No Project Alternative as a result because there would be less ground disturbance.

Lake Tahoe Basin

There are no aspects of this alternative that deal specifically with the Lake Tahoe Basin. Therefore, this alternative is expected to result in the same level of environmental impacts in the Lake Tahoe Basin as the No Project Alternative.

ALTERNATIVE #10: NEW WHITE ROCK ROAD CONNECTION

This alternative assumes a new connection to White Rock Road in the area south of U.S. 50 and east of Latrobe Road. There are several connections the road could make: Suncast Lane, Investment Boulevard, Sandstone Drive, or Golden Foothill Parkway to White Rock Road; Investment Boulevard to Payen Road; or the extension of Payen Road to connect to Latrobe Road south of the El Dorado Hills Business Park. All of these potential connections would need to include a route to and interchange with U.S. 50 in Sacramento County. The intent is to create a new access-restricted east/west roadway for an additional outlet for traffic from the business area south of U.S. 50 to the freeway. The feasibility of this alternative is not known. It would rely on approvals from the City of Folsom and/or Sacramento County. These

agencies have been reluctant in the past to approve this type of roadway connection from El Dorado County.

No land use map or policy set has been developed for this alternative, and no land use forecasts have been run. This alternative provides a mitigation option to address traffic impacts in the same geographic area as Alternative #9. Traffic analysis testing the performance of this measure has been performed and is discussed further below.

Relationship to the Project Objectives

This alternative would likely meet all of the stated project objectives. It would particularly meet the objective of a safe, efficient, and effective transportation system (Objective 5) because this new roadway connection would serve to efficiently funnel traffic from the county's core employment center (i.e., the El Dorado Hills Business Park) to the highway system.

Environmental Effects

Land Use and Housing

The development of this new roadway connection would not affect land use and housing patterns. It would serve only to alleviate traffic circulation in the southern El Dorado Hills area. However, it could result in secondary effects by opening undeveloped areas of primarily Sacramento County to development pressures.

The alignment of the potential roadway is not known, but it would necessarily cross Sacramento County territory to make the connection. The extent of potential growth inducement cannot be known, because it would depend on land use decisions by Sacramento County or the City of Folsom (if it located within Folsom's sphere of influence). This impact could be precluded by designing the connection to have no or limited access, and/or if Sacramento County and the City of Folsom decline to allow new development. Therefore, this alternative would result in less severe impacts on land use and housing than the No Project Alternative.

Agriculture and Forestry

The construction of this new roadway connection would not directly affect agricultural and forest resources because there are none in the general area of a potential new connection. Therefore, this alternative is expected to result in the same level of impacts as the No Project Alternative.

Visual Resources

Under the New White Rock Road Connection Alternative, the visual character of the southern El Dorado Hills area would be affected. Although this alternative would reduce traffic along existing roadways, the proposed new roadway would introduce a new built feature and associated traffic in a previously undisturbed area, thereby resulting in impacts on the visual environment. Therefore, this alternative would result in worse impacts on visual resources than the No Project Alternative.

Traffic and Circulation

A new connection to White Rock Road in the area south of U.S. 50 and east of Latrobe Road would reduce traffic congestion in the El Dorado Hills area directly reducing traffic impacts to Latrobe Road, White Rock Road, and U.S. 50 in El Dorado County. The projected LOS F conditions on Latrobe Road and White Rock Road under the equal-weight alternatives could be improved to LOS E or better with the new road. However, such a roadway would also disperse traffic to roadways in the City of Folsom and Sacramento County, potentially contributing to congestion in those jurisdictions. Overall, it is likely that traffic impacts would be the same; however, this alternative would disperse them from El Dorado County to Sacramento County and the City of Folsom. Impacts to the county would be beneficial. Secondary impacts elsewhere could be significant. This alternative would result in improvements to traffic and circulation within the county as compared to the No Project Alternative.

Water Resources—Water, Wastewater, Water Quality

The proposed roadway connection would not affect water resources. Therefore, this alternative would result in similar impacts on water resources as the No Project Alternative.

Utilities

The proposed roadway connection would not affect utilities. Therefore, this alternative would result in similar impacts to utilities as the No Project Alternative.

Public Services

The proposed roadway connection would not affect public services. Therefore, this alternative would result in similar impacts to public services as the No Project Alternative.

Human Health and Safety

The proposed roadway connection would not affect human health and safety. Therefore, this alternative would result in similar impacts to human health and safety as the No Project Alternative.

Geology, Soils, and Mineral Resources

The construction of a new roadway connection could result in substantial ground-disturbing activities, which could lead to erosion impacts and unstable slopes associated with cuts and fills. However, construction would be required to comply with the Grading Ordinance, which would mitigate this effect. Therefore, this alternative would result in similar impacts associated with geology, soils, and mineral resources as the No Project Alternative.

Noise

By reducing traffic congestion in the El Dorado Hills area, this alternative may reduce associated traffic noise impacts relative to No Project conditions. However, the proposed roadway connection would serve as a new noise source in a new area, Sacramento County. The net number of people exposed to noise impacts would decrease, but there would be some new exposures. This alternative would result in improvements in noise impacts within the county as compared to the No Project Alternative.

Air Quality

By reducing traffic congestion in the El Dorado Hills area, this alternative would improve local air quality, particularly CO levels on intersections with Latrobe Road. Therefore, this alternative would result in less severe air quality impacts than the No Project Alternative.

Biological Resources

The construction of a new roadway connection could result in impacts on biological resources from new ground-disturbing activities. Therefore, this alternative would result in slightly greater impacts on biological resources than the No Project Alternative.

Cultural Resources

The construction of a new roadway connection could result in impacts on cultural resources from new ground-disturbing activities. Therefore, this alternative would result in slightly greater impacts on cultural resources than the No Project Alternative.

Lake Tahoe Basin

There are no aspects of this alternative that deal specifically with the Lake Tahoe Basin. As under the No Project Alternative, land use planning in the Lake Tahoe Basin is assumed to be governed by the Regional Plan for the Lake Tahoe Basin. Therefore, this alternative is expected to result in the same level of environmental impacts in the Lake Tahoe Basin as the No Project Alternative.

ALTERNATIVE #11: TRANSIT EMPHASIS

This alternative assumes as its base the Environmentally Constrained Alternative, subject to such modifications necessary to promote the development of light rail and extended transit opportunities in the county. The extension of light rail from the end of the planned Folsom line to El Dorado Hills would be included under this alternative. An improved commuter, feeder, and local bus system; improved park-and-ride facilities; and extensive nonvehicular system would also be included.

No land use forecasts or traffic analysis specific to this alternative have been run. A land use density of 7 to 15 dwelling units per acre over a contiguous area of at least 25 square miles, including El Dorado Hills, would likely be needed to support this alternative. Therefore, population levels would be higher in El Dorado Hills under this alternative than the No Project Alternative in order to create sufficient density to make this alternative feasible. This alternative provides a mitigation option to address traffic impacts in the same geographic area addressed in Alternative #9.

Relationship to the Project Objectives

Objectives #1 and #5 would not be achieved in El Dorado Hills. From a countywide perspective, however, all objectives would likely be met.

Environmental Effects

Land Use and Housing

This alternative would result in a significant change in the character of the El Dorado Hills area, which currently has relatively low densities, to a higher density "semi-urban" environment . Outside of El Dorado Hills, land use incompatibilities would be reduced because growth that may have occurred in rural areas would be expected to develop more in the El Dorado Hills area. Further, more affordable housing opportunities would be available with the increase in housing densities. This alternative would result in increased impacts on land use in El Dorado Hills, and beneficial impacts on land use and housing countywide.

Agriculture and Forestry

Because this alternative would shift development from rural areas to the El Dorado Hills area, the potential for impacts on agriculture and forest resources would be reduced. Therefore, this alternative would result in less severe impacts on agricultural and forest resources than the No Project Alternative.

Visual Resources

Because this alternative would shift development from rural areas to the El Dorado Hills area, features that could potentially detract from the scenic environment in the rural parts of the county would be reduced. More intense development in the El Dorado Hills area would intensity the urban nature of that area. This alternative would result in less severe impacts on visual resources outside of El Dorado Hills.

Traffic and Circulation

This alternative would result in a severe worsening of congestion on U.S. 50. This would make transit an attractive mode choice. However, the increased congestion would not be consistent with the County's LOS objectives and policies. Therefore, this alternative would likely result in a significant worsening of impacts on traffic and circulation as compared to the No Project Alternative.

Water Resources

Water Supply

The concentration of growth in the El Dorado Hills area would result in a higher demand for water than under the No Project Alternative. A higher proportion of residents would be supplied by local water purveyors, thereby reducing dependence on groundwater supplies. Therefore, this alternative would result in more severe impacts associated with municipal water supplies, and the impacts associated with providing new supply.

Wastewater

The proposed change in land uses would result in significantly greater development within EID's wastewater treatment plant service area. Irrespective, because the NPDES permit process requires that permitted discharge is protective of beneficial uses of the receiving water, impacts from wastewater treatment expansion would likely not be more severe under this alternative than the No Project Alternative, even if discharges from the Deer Creek and El Dorado Hills wastewater treatment plants are higher than the No Project Alternative.

Water Quality

The water quality programs in effect for the No Project Alternative would also apply to this alternative. Even though density would be increased over the No Project Alternative, the County has strong water quality improvement/maintenance programs in place to reduce potential water quality impacts of new development to a less-than-significant level. Impacts would be the same.

Utilities

Because this alternative would result in significantly higher development levels in El Dorado Hills than the No Project Alternative, the demand for utilities would be significantly higher. It is unlikely that the existing infrastructure could accommodate this growth; hence, expansions would be required.

Public Services

Because this alternative would result in significantly higher development levels in El Dorado Hills than the No Project Alternative, the demand for public services would be significantly

higher. It is unlikely that the existing delivery system for public services could accommodate this growth; hence, expansions would be required.

Human Health and Safety

Because development under this alternative would be concentrated in the western part of the county, it would avoid many human health and safety issues associated with the rural parts of the county, such as wildfires. However, there is the potential to cause a higher degree of exposure to naturally occurring asbestos (because of the location of development) during construction. Therefore, this alternative would result in more severe human health and safety impacts than the No Project Alternative.

Geology, Soils, and Mineral Resources

Because this alternative would shift development from rural areas to the El Dorado Hills area, less development would occur on steep slopes, which could result in erosion and landslide/avalanche hazards, and in important mineral resource areas. Therefore, this alternative would result in less severe impacts on geology, soils, and mineral resources than the No Project Alternative.

Noise

Because the development densities needed to support light rail and extended transit opportunities would cause more traffic and traffic congestion, traffic-related noise would increase. Therefore, this alternative would result in more severe noise impacts than the No Project Alternative.

Air Quality

Because the development densities needed to support light rail and extended transit opportunities would cause more traffic and traffic congestion, vehicular air emissions would increase. Therefore, this alternative would result in more severe air quality impacts than the No Project Alternative.

Biological Resources

The development of transit into the county would shift development from the rural parts of the county to the El Dorado Hills area, thereby reducing biological impacts associated with development in important biological habitat. Development that would occur in the El Dorado

Hills area would occur in an area that has already been disturbed. Therefore, this alternative would result in less severe impacts on biological resources than the No Project Alternative.

Cultural Resources

The development of transit into the county would shift development from the rural parts of the county to the El Dorado Hills area, thereby reducing potential cultural resource impacts associated with development in undisturbed areas. Therefore, this alternative would result in less severe impacts on cultural resources than the No Project Alternative.

Lake Tahoe Basin

This alternative assumes no other policies or assumptions that deal specifically with the Lake Tahoe Basin. This alternative is expected to result in the same level of environmental impacts to the Lake Tahoe Basin as the No Project Alternative.

ALTERNATIVE #12: COMPACT DEVELOPMENT

This alternative would establish policies and land use designations that promote a more compact urban form. This would include changes to the County's land use designations to allow greater densities. Among the goals to be attained with this alternative are development densities and design that support walking, bicycling, and transit, allow for mixed use, and create market incentives for the development of affordable housing. The range of possible mechanisms for achieving this includes modifications to residential densities to increase yield by decreasing minimum lot sizes. Another approach would be to target specific designations to create incentives for more affordable housing. For example, the High-Density Residential designation could be increased to a maximum of 15 dwelling units per acre for projects including a specified percentage of affordable housing. To address concerns about the intensity of housing, projects that develop with these increased maximums could be restricted to no more than 200 units at a location. To further emphasize a shift from rural to more urban development patterns within community regions, these changes could be accommodated by reducing densities of land outside of designated Community Regions and Rural Centers.

No land use map or policy set has been developed for this alternative, and no land use forecasts have been prepared. This alternative provides a mitigation option to address dispersed development under several of the alternatives. In general, more intensive land uses would be expected in the county's community regions and rural centers and less intensive land uses in the outlying areas.

Relationship to the Project Objectives

This alternative would meet all of the project objectives. In particular, compact development patterns would help attain the objective of having development occur in distinct communities (Objective 3). Further, because development would be located in clusters within existing Community Regions, it would also likely be located near existing public service and utility infrastructure (Objective 4).

Environmental Effects

Land Use and Housing

Under this alternative, land use development patterns would take on a more clustered form. Land use incompatibilities would be reduced because growth that may have occurred in rural areas would develop in the relatively more urban areas, and the distinction between communities would be maintained. More affordable-housing opportunities would be available. Development patterns would reinforce the importance of community centers. Therefore, this alternative would result in less severe impacts on land use and housing than the No Project Alternative.

Agriculture and Forestry

Because this alternative would shift development from rural areas to the more urban areas, the potential for impacts on agriculture and forest resources would be reduced. Therefore, this alternative would result in less severe impacts on agricultural and forest resources than the No Project Alternative.

Visual Resources

Because this alternative would shift development from rural areas to relatively more urban areas, features that could potentially detract from the scenic environment in the rural parts of the county would be reduced. More intense development patterns in community regions and rural centers, however, may result in negative visual impacts in those areas where these clusters are developed. Because less of the natural environment would be disturbed overall, this alternative would result in lower potential for visual resources as compared to the No Project Alternative.

Traffic and Circulation

The compact development patterns would increase potential traffic impacts in localized areas of the community centers. Increases in walk, bicycle, and transit trips due to the land use changes would reduce overall vehicle trips. Overall traffic impacts would be less.

Water Resources

Water Supply

More people would be added to the county under this alternative, thereby increasing the demand for water supplies over No Project conditions. It is assumed that a higher proportion of residents would be supplied by local water purveyors, if growth is directed to Community Regions. Therefore, this alternative would result in more severe impacts associated with municipal water supplies, and the impacts associated with providing new supply.

Wastewater

Development centered more on Community Regions may result in a larger demand within EID's wastewater treatment plant service area. Irrespective, because the NPDES permit process requires that permitted discharge is protective of beneficial uses of the receiving water, impacts from wastewater treatment expansion would likely not be more severe under this alternative than the No Project Alternative, even if discharges from the Deer Creek and El Dorado Hills wastewater treatment plants are higher than the No Project Alternative. Septic use standards would be followed to the same degree as the No Project Alternative. Impacts would be the same.

Water Quality

The water quality programs in effect for the No Project Alternative would also apply to this alternative. Even though density would be increased over the No Project Alternative, the County has strong water quality improvement/maintenance programs in place to reduce potential water quality impacts of new development to a less-than-significant level. Impacts would be the same.

Utilities

Because this alternative would result in higher development levels than the No Project Alternative, the demand for utilities would be relatively higher. However, the provision of

such services would be less problematic because existing infrastructure would likely be in place. Therefore, this alternative would result in less severe impacts to utilities.

Public Services

Because this alternative would result in higher development levels than the No Project Alternative, the demand for public services would be relatively higher. However, the provision of such services would be less problematic because of the clustered development pattern. Therefore, this alternative would result in less severe impacts to public services relative to the No Project Alternative.

Human Health and Safety

Development under this alternative would shift away from the rural parts of the county where many human health and safety issues are more common, such as wildfire hazard. This may be counteracted somewhat by the effect of introducing more people to the county. Therefore, this alternative would result in similar human health and safety impacts as the No Project Alternative.

Geology, Soils, and Mineral Resources

Because this alternative would shift development from rural areas to more urban areas, less development would occur on steep slopes, which could result in reduced erosion and landslide/avalanche hazards. Depending on the location of proposed development clusters, it may or may not affect known mineral resources. Therefore, this alternative would result in less severe impacts on geology, soils, and mineral resources than the No Project Alternative.

Noise

Because this alternative would likely result in overall improvements in localized traffic congestion within community centers, traffic-related noise would likely decrease in proximity to proposed development centers. However, ambient noise levels may increase with more compact development. Therefore, this alternative would likely result in equal or more severe noise impacts than the No Project Alternative.

Air Quality

Because this alternative would likely result in overall improvements in localized traffic congestion in community centers, traffic-related air emissions would likely decrease in

proximity to proposed development centers. Depending on the ability to improve transit service and the potential to place residents closer to jobs in community centers, overall VMT in the county may be reduced. Thus, air quality impacts would also decrease from No Project levels. Overall, this alternative would likely result in improved air quality.

Biological Resources

The compact development pattern would shift development from the rural parts of the county to more urban areas, thereby reducing biological impacts associated with development in important biological habitat. Development that would occur in the proposed development centers is likely to be in areas that have already been disturbed. Therefore, this alternative would result in less severe impacts on biological resources than the No Project Alternative.

Cultural Resources

The compact development pattern would shift development from the rural parts of the county to more urban areas, thereby reducing cultural resources impacts associated with development in undisturbed areas. Therefore, this alternative would result in less severe impacts on cultural resources than the No Project Alternative.

Lake Tahoe Basin

This alternative assumes no differences in the policy set from those of the No Project Alternative, which includes a separate Tahoe Basin Element and goals and policies pertaining to resources in the Lake Tahoe Basin. This alternative is expected to result in the same level of environmental impacts to the Lake Tahoe Basin as the No Project Alternative.

6.4 ENVIRONMENTALLY SUPERIOR ALTERNATIVE

An EIR is required to identify the environmentally superior alternative from among the range of reasonable alternatives that are evaluated. State CEQA Guidelines §15126(d)(2) states that if the environmentally superior alternative is the no project alternative, the EIR shall also identify an environmentally superior alternative from among the other alternatives. Alternatives considered here include the four equal-weight alternatives and all comparative alternatives.

Table 6-1 depicts the relative impacts of each alternative, including the equal-weight analysis alternatives, as compared with the No Project Alternative. As expressed previously, the comparative analysis in Table 6-1 is based on impacts generally expected over the General

Plan's planning horizon, 2025. This approach was taken because it is based on a forecast of what would realistically be expected to occur in the foreseeable future. The buildout analysis in Chapter 5 (equal-weight alternatives analysis) is based on 100% buildout of all available lots at the maximum buildout potential of each lot. While a valid analysis in considering the maximum worst-case impacts, it is also not a realistic expectation of the future given both that there are no known instances where general planned communities develop to this fullest extent, and there are a number of regulatory and financial/infrastructural constraints that make such a buildout potential unlikely.

ENVIRONMENTALLY SUPERIOR ALTERNATIVE AMONG EQUAL-WEIGHT ALTERNATIVES

There is no clear environmentally superior alternative among the equal-weight alternatives. In short, each of the equal-weight alternatives is environmentally superior to other alternatives on some issues, except for the 1996 General Plan Alternative. The 1996 General Plan Alternative is environmentally inferior, or at best is approximately equal, on all issues.

In reviewing Table 6-1, it may appear that two alternatives may be environmentally superior because they have the same comparative ranking as the No Project Alternative. For instance, both the Roadway Constrained Six-Lane "Plus" and the Environmentally Constrained alternatives are environmentally superior to the No Project Alternative with respect to biological resources. In instances like this, the choice of which alternative is the environmentally superior alternative is derived by review of the analysis in Chapter 5. The following lists the topics under which each of the equal-weight alternatives is environmentally superior:

NO PROJECT ALTERNATIVE

- Visual Resources
- Traffic and Circulation
- Water Resources
- Utilities
- Public Services
- Human Health and Safety
- Air Quality
- Lake Tahoe Basin (Roadway Constrained Six-Lane "Plus" Alternative is approximately equal)

ROADWAY CONSTRAINED SIX-LANE "PLUS" ALTERNATIVE

- Noise (Environmentally Constrained Alternative is approximately equal)
- Lake Tahoe Basin (No Project Alternative is approximately equal)

ENVIRONMENTALLY CONSTRAINED ALTERNATIVE

- Land Use and Housing
- Agriculture and Forestry
- Geology, Soils, and Mineral Resources
- Noise (Roadway Constrained 6-Lane "Plus" Alternative is approximately equal)
- Biological Resources
- Cultural Resources

While no clear environmentally superior alternative is derived from this list, the analysis in Chapter 5 and this list suggests that, on balance, the No Project Alternative is the environmentally superior alternative among the equal-weight alternatives. The Environmentally Constrained Alternative is the environmentally superior alternative among the other three alternatives considered in the equal-weight analysis.

ENVIRONMENTALLY SUPERIOR ALTERNATIVE AMONG ALL ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

The environmentally superior alternative among all alternatives considered in this EIR is Alternative #12: Compact Development. This alternative would be environmentally superior to the No Project Alternative in all categories except water supply and noise (environmentally inferior), and human health and safety and Lake Tahoe Basin (approximately equal). Although no forecasts have been prepared for this alternative, based on its land use concept, it would have a greater amount of development than the No Project Alternative.

Alternative #9: Modified El Dorado Hills Development South of U.S. 50 is also environmentally superior to the No Project Alternative, with better environmental rankings in land use and housing, visual resources, traffic and circulation, water supply, air quality, biological resources, and cultural resources. For all other topics, it would be approximately equal to the No Project Alternative. This alternative would have similar or less development than No Project, as it would have the same land use restrictions but would substantially curtail development south of U.S. 50.

Land use policies and land use maps were not developed for either of these alternatives.