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EXECUTIVE LETTER
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Planning Commission Hearing: December 8, 2025

Commissioners:

This Supplemental Evidence and Rebuttal Packet is submitted for inclusion in the administrative record for the appeal of the Director's September 5, 2025 decision regarding the 257 W. Linden Avenue project. Its purpose is to provide clear, organized responses to the Staff Report and Exhibits A, I, and J, and to supplement the technical and legal record with updated evidence now available to the City.

The appeal seeks recognition of the project's entitlement to ministerial approval at the proposed 75-unit density under State law, including the Housing Accountability Act and the Density Bonus Law. Updated SCAG-based analysis from Iteris confirms that the project site qualifies as a Very Low VMT Area, satisfying the statutory criteria for unlimited density and associated waivers. The materials also address the fire access issues raised by staff, demonstrating that feasible mitigation exists and that these technical details are properly addressed during ministerial plan review—not through a density reduction.

The attached packet contains the following materials:

1. Point-by-point rebuttal to the Staff Report
2. Rebuttal to Exhibit A (Draft Resolution Findings)
3. Rebuttal to Exhibit I (City Transportation Analysis)
4. Rebuttal to Exhibit J (Fire Access Memorandum)
5. Fire Access Supplemental Sheet
6. Summary of Burbank's Affordable Housing Need
7. Iteris Transportation Memorandum (Sept. 24, 2025)
8. Additional supporting materials as referenced

These documents demonstrate that the conditions required for a density reduction under the Housing Accountability Act are not met, that the record does not support a finding of unavoidable health or safety impacts, and that feasible mitigation measures remain available. The project—being fully deed-restricted affordable housing—directly advances

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both State housing mandates and the City's documented need for affordable housing production.

The applicant respectfully requests that the Planning Commission grant the appeal and allow the project to proceed at the density permitted under State law. All technical items raised by staff can be addressed through the normal ministerial plan-review process.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Sam Aslanian Architect

Rebuttal to Staff Report – Appeal of Director's Decision for 257 W. Linden Avenue
Project No. 25-0002550
Submitted by: Sam Aslanian Architect, Inc.

Introduction

This rebuttal responds to the staff report recommending denial of the appeal and confirmation of the Director's Decision limiting the project to 11 units. The appellant respectfully submits that the staff recommendation is based on incomplete analysis, reliance on outdated vehicle miles traveled (VMT) data, misapplication of State housing laws, and findings that do not meet the evidentiary standards required under the Housing Accountability Act and Density Bonus Law. A 75-unit, 100 percent affordable project on this site is not only feasible and legally supported, but directly aligned with the City's documented housing needs and adopted plans.

A separate one-page summary of Burbank's documented affordable housing need is included for reference.

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1. Updated VMT Analysis Confirms the Site Qualifies as a Very Low VMT Area

The City's staff report relies exclusively on the HELPR tool, a coarse initial screening tool, to conclude the project site does not qualify as a Very Low VMT Area. HELPR is not determinative for parcel-specific VMT eligibility. It uses older assumptions, simplified regional screening, and does not represent the underlying SCAG regional modeling.

Iteris Inc., one of the most respected transportation modeling firms in the State and frequently retained by SCAG, Caltrans, and FHWA, prepared updated VMT analysis for the site using the SCAG 2019 and 2025 regional travel demand models. This is the methodology consistent with the City's Traffic Analysis Guidelines and with standard professional practice.

The Iteris analysis concludes:

• Residents at this location drive approximately 35 percent fewer miles per day than the regional average.
• The threshold for Very Low VMT status under Government Code 65915 is a 15 percent reduction.
• The project site therefore **clearly qualifies** as a Very Low VMT Area.

The City has not provided any modeling, technical evaluation, or contrary evidence to rebut these findings.

Under the Density Bonus Law, qualifying as a Very Low VMT Area entitles the project to a zero-parking baseline, unlimited density, and mandatory waivers of development standards that would physically preclude construction of the project.

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2. Fire Access Concerns Do Not Constitute a Basis for Denial Under State Law

The Housing Accountability Act requires that any denial or density reduction of a housing development be supported by substantial evidence of a specific, unmitigable, direct impact on public health and safety.

The staff report does not provide such evidence.

The Director's Decision and staff report identify general concerns regarding fire access, but no quantitative analysis, no evaluation of feasible design alternatives, and no explanation of how the identified concerns cannot be addressed through plan-check conditions or equivalent alternative methods allowed under the California Fire Code.

The appellant has proposed:

- A recorded Emergency Vehicle Access easement along the alley;
- A hammerhead-T turnaround meeting Appendix D;
- A new private hydrant;
- Revised FDC placement at the street frontage;
- Striping and signage to maintain clear width;
- AutoTURN analysis at plan check;
- Coordination with utilities to maintain vertical clearances.

These measures are consistent with the California Fire Code, the Burbank Municipal Code, and standard infill practices in urbanized areas of Los Angeles County.

Because feasible mitigation exists, fire access cannot legally serve as a basis for reducing density under the Housing Accountability Act or for withholding mandatory waivers under the Density Bonus Law.

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3. Burbank Has a Documented and Significant Shortage of Affordable Housing

Burbank's adopted Housing Element, Consolidated Plan, and RHNA reporting all demonstrate a substantial unmet need for affordable housing.

Key facts:

• Burbank must plan for 3,971 lower-income units (very low + low) in the current RHNA cycle.
• To date, progress reporting shows only 3 very-low-income units and 377 low-income units produced.
• Local affordable housing providers report fully occupied properties with 2-5-year wait times.
• Over half of the City's renters are cost burdened, and nearly one-third are severely cost burdened.
• The Consolidated Plan states that Burbank faces a shortage of affordable housing, with demand far exceeding supply.

In this context, scaling the project to 11 units materially undermines the City's ability to meet its adopted housing obligations and contradicts its own planning documents. The proposed 75-unit 100 percent affordable project directly advances the City's stated goals.

A one-page summary of these findings, drawn from City-authored documents, has been provided separately for the Commission's reference.

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4. The City's Findings Do Not Meet the Legal Threshold Required to Deny or Reduce a Housing Project

Under State law, including:

• The Housing Accountability Act (Gov. Code 65589.5)
• The Density Bonus Law (Gov. Code 65915)
• SB 35 (Gov. Code 65913.4)
• The Permit Streamlining Act

the City may not deny or reduce the density of a qualifying affordable housing project unless it can demonstrate, with substantial evidence in the record, that:

• A specific, quantifiable, direct, unavoidable impact on public health and safety exists, and
• No feasible mitigation measures or alternatives could reduce or avoid the impact.

The staff report does not meet this burden.

The fire access concerns are mitigable.
The VMT determination is contradicted by more accurate modeling.
No objective standard has been identified that physically precludes construction of the

proposed project.
No substantial evidence has been provided supporting the reduction to 11 units.

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5. Legal Implications of an Unsupported Denial

The appellant wishes to resolve this matter at the Planning Commission level. However, if the Commission's action affirms the reduced 11-unit version based on findings unsupported by substantial evidence, this would constitute the City's final action and would shift the matter to State housing enforcement and judicial review under the Housing Accountability Act and Density Bonus Law.

Those statutes provide specific remedies, including court-ordered approval of the project, removal of unlawful conditions, mandatory attorney's fees, and, in certain circumstances, per-unit penalties. It is the appellant's preference to avoid this outcome and secure approval at the Commission level.

Conclusion

The evidence in the record demonstrates that the project site qualifies as a Very Low VMT Area under State law, that the fire access concerns are mitigable through objective code-compliant measures, and that the proposed 75-unit 100 percent affordable project directly advances Burbank's documented housing needs.

For these reasons, the appellant respectfully requests that the Planning Commission grant the appeal and direct staff to process the project consistent with State housing law.

STAFF REPORT

COMNUNITY
DEVELOPNENT

City Planning Commission

Fred Ramirez, Assistant Community Development Director - Planning Via:Scott Plambaeck, Planning Manager
By: Daniel Villa, Principal Planners

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PROJECT NO. **25-0002550;** AN APPEAL OF THE **CITY OF BURBANX COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR'S DECISION TO APPROVE,** AS CONDITIONED, **A DEVELOPMENT REVIEW &** DENSITY BONUS APPLICATION THAT **ALLOWS** FOR THE CONSTRUCTION OF AN 11- UNIT **RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT AT 257** WEST LINDEN AVENUE

RECOMMENDATION

Adopt A RESOLUTION OF THE PLANNING COMMISSION OF THE CITY OF BURBANK DENYING AN APPEAL OF THE CITY OF BURBANK COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR'S DECISION TO APPROVE, AS CONDITIONED, A DEVELOPMENT REVIEW AND DENSITY BONUS APPLICATION; AND CONDITIONALLY APPROVE A DEVELOPMENT REVIEW AND DENSITY BONUS PROJECT THAT ALLOWS FOR THE CONSTRUCTION OF AN 11-UNIT RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT AT 257 WEST LINDEN AVENUE. (Exhibit A)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On September 11, 2025, the applicant, Sam Aslanian Architect, LLC (“Applicant”), filed an appeal of the Community Development Director's Decision (“Director's Decision”) to approve a Development Review and Density Bonus Application that allows for the construction of an 11-unit residential development at 257 West Linden Avenue, in the R-3 (Medium Density Residential) zone. The Applicant originally proposed a six-story, 75-unit affordable housing development. The Director's Decision conditioned that the project be developed at a reduced density of 11 units, to address inconsistencies with objective standards in the Burbank Municipal Code (BMC) and identified specific, adverse impacts upon the public health or safety.

The Applicant (hereinafter referred to interchangeably as, the “Applicant” or “Appellant”) asserts that the Director's Decision unlawfully reduced the project's density from 75 units to 11 units. The appeal application is included as Exhibit B.

As outlined in the subsequent sections of this report, it is staff's assessment that the Director's Decision to approve the project at a reduced density was supported by a preponderance of the evidence and consistent with local and state housing laws. Therefore, staff recommends that the Planning Commission (“Commission”) uphold the Director's Decision and deny the appeal. The Commission's decision will be final and will not be subject to further appeal.

BACKGROUND

Project Site and Surrounding Area

The project is proposed at 257 West Linden Avenue (“Project Site”). The Project Site is generally located in the eastern part of the City, east of West Alameda Avenue, north of South Victory Boulevard and south of the Interstate 5. The following Table 1 provides general property information for the Project Site and surrounding land uses.

Table 1: General Property and Surrounding Land Use Information	
Address	257 West Linden Avenue
Cross Streets	Between South Victory Boulevard and South Lake Street
Assessor's Parcel Number	5625-014-004
General Plan Designation	Medium Density Residential
Zoning	R-3 (Medium Density Residential)
Property Size	9,184.6 square feet (0.21 acres)
Current Development on the Property	Existing single-family residence.
Maximum Residential Density Allowed per BMC	6 dwelling units allowed per the BMC § 10-1-626.5 (27 units/acre).
Street Classification and Width	West Linden Avenue at Project Site — Local Street, 36-foot-wide traveled way.
Surrounding Neighborhood: North	Existing single-family and multi-family residences (ranging from 1-5 units).
South	Existing single-family and multi-family residences (ranging from 1-5 units), and the Burbank-Western Flood Control Channel.
East	Existing single-family and multi-family residences (ranging from 1-4 units).
West	Existing multifamily-family residence (ranging from 4-16 units).

In addition, Aerial Photographs and Site Photos are included in Exhibit C.

Project Description
On April 29, 2025, the Applicant submitted a Development Review and Density Bonus application for a 75-unit affordable housing rental development at the Project Site ("Proposed Project"). The proposal consisted of a six-story, 65-foot-tall, residential building containing studio and one-bedroom units ranging in size from 244 to 362 square feet, with no vehicle parking provided. The ground floor would include a lobby, a business office, storage areas, recreation rooms, a laundry facility, a trash and recycling room, and bicycle storage for 75 bicycles. Floors two through six would contain the 75 residential units.

Of the 75 units, 74 units were proposed to be deed-restricted affordable units, including 60 units restricted and rented to low-income households and 14 units restricted and rented to moderate-income households. One unit would be designated as the on-site manager's unit and rented at market rate. No private open space would be provided for any of the residential units. The proposed project would include demolition of the existing single-family residence on the site.

All application materials submitted for City review, including project plans, are provided as Exhibit D.

Application Processing and Community Development Director's Decision
The Proposed Project was deemed complete for processing on May 30, 2025 (Exhibit E). The City's Inter-Departmental Review Committee (IDRC)[1] subsequently reviewed the application for consistency with all applicable objective standards. The IDRC concluded that the project failed to meet applicable objective standards in the Burbank Municipal Code (BMC), did not meet State law requirements that would afford unlimited density, and could not be constructed without specific, adverse impacts to public health and safety. Specifically, the project failed to meet multiple development standards and required fire mitigation measures under the California Fire Code related to fire access and emergency response.

Staff issued City Comment Letters on July 10, 2025, and August 8, 2025, identifying these inconsistencies and required fire-safety measures be addressed (Exhibit F). The Applicant responded with written statements but declined to revise the project plans to ensure compliance with applicable objective standards and instead, requested approval of the original project proposal (Exhibit G). The City provided the Applicant multiple opportunities to correct the inconsistencies. To date, the Applicant has refused to amend the project proposal to comply with all applicable objective standards.

Therefore, pursuant to CA Government Code § 65589.5(j)(1)(A) and BMC § 10-1-1912(E), and given that the Applicant declined to revise the project plans to address the City's identified inconsistencies with applicable objective standards and required fire mitigation measures, the City of Burbank Community Development Director (“Director”)

[1] The IDRC is a committee made of representatives from City Departments that review development project applications. These departments include, but are not limited to: Community Development, Public Works, Parks and Recreation, Fire, Police, Burbank Water and Power and the City Attorney's Office.

proceeded with conditional approval of the project at a lower density on September 5, 2025, finding that the project as originally proposed would have a specific, adverse impact on the public health and safety which could not be mitigated without lowering the density. The approval was conditioned to ensure compliance with applicable objective standards and public health and safety requirements, including: (1) the project shall not exceed a total of 11 residential units[2]; (2) the project shall comply with the California Fire Code and all objective standards in the Burbank Municipal Code; and (3) the Applicant shall submit revised plans that address all specific, adverse impacts associated with public health and safety standards (hereinafter referred to as, the "Approved Project, as Conditioned"). The Director's Decision approving the Approved Project, as Conditioned, is included as Exhibit H.

Appeal of the Community Development Director's Decision
On September 11, 2025, the Applicant filed an appeal of the Director's Decision pursuant to BMC § 10-1-1907.2, asserting that the Director unlawfully reduced the project's density from 75 to 11 residential units. The appeal application (Exhibit B) includes the following points:

1. "Grounds for Appeal" — The Appellant asserts that the Director's Decision unlawfully reduced the project's density from 75 units to 11 units, which the Appellant contends constitutes a "disapproval" under the Housing Accountability Act. The Appellant argues that since the proposed project is 100% affordable, the City may not reduce density without issuing specific, written health-and-safety findings supported by a preponderance of the evidence, which they claim are absent (Point 1-A). The Appellant further asserts that the project is entitled to unlimited density and associated waivers under the Density Bonus Law (Point 1-B), that the site qualifies as a Very Low VMT Area and therefore requires no on-site parking (Point 1-C), and that fire-access concerns can be addressed through alternative compliance measures without reducing project density (Point 1-D)

RESPONSE TO STAFF COMMENT

- ***As a threshold matter, once updated SCAG modeling confirms that the project site is located in a Very Low VMT Area, the project is entitled to unlimited density under Government Code section 65915, and compliance with applicable objective standards is addressed during ministerial plan review rather than through density reduction at the entitlement stage. Staff's summary generally reflects the organizational structure of the appeal, but it contains several inaccuracies that should be clarified. The appeal does not assert that unlimited density applies regardless of code standards; it explains that State law requires approval of the proposed density unless the City makes specific, quantifiable, unavoidable health-and-safety findings supported by a preponderance of the evidence, which were not issued. In addition, the appeal does not treat Very Low VMT status as an assumption; it relies on updated SCAG model outputs presented in the Iteris memorandum, which confirm the site meets the statutory definition. Finally, the appeal does not claim that fire access issues can be ignored; it explains that feasible mitigation and alternative methods exist and that these are properly addressed during ministerial plan check, not used as a basis to reduce density.***

2. “Relief Requested” — The Appellant requests that the Planning Commission vacate the Director's Decision (Point 2-A), recognize the project's eligibility as a Very Low VMT Area under CA Government Code § 65915 (Point 2-B), and approve the project ministerially at the proposed 75-unit density with associated waivers and incentives (Point 2-C). The Appellant also requests that the City accept a proposed emergency vehicle access easement, hydrant, and fire lane configuration as a compliance method for fire access (Point 2-D).

RESPONSE TO STAFF COMMENT

As with the prior section, staff’s summary captures the general outline of the appeal but omits important context. The appeal does not request approval irrespective of objective standards; it requests ministerial approval at the proposed density because State law requires it when Very Low VMT eligibility is met and when no unmitigable health-and-safety impacts exist. The appeal explains that updated SCAG modeling confirms Very Low VMT status and that associated Density Bonus provisions—including unlimited density—are therefore triggered. The request regarding fire access is not presented as a fixed design but as an example of feasible mitigation demonstrating that the project can comply through alternative methods during ministerial plan review. The appeal seeks application of the governing statutory framework, not discretionary redesign or discretionary approval.

3. “Supporting Record” — In support of the appeal, the Appellant provides SCAG HELPR 3.0 model outputs and parcel mapping, statutory excerpts from the Density Bonus Law and Housing Accountability Act, prior correspondence with City staff including the completeness letter dated May 30, 2025, and applicant letters dated July 7 and July 8, 2025, and a conceptual plan illustrating the proposed emergency

[2] The Project was conditioned to a maximum number of 11 residential units, as this is consistent with the density permitted in the BMC (6 units), plus an 80% density bonus (5 units) as per the CA Government Code § 65915(g(3)(D)(i) (CA Density Bonus Law).

vehicle access, hydrant location, and fire lane improvements. The Appellant also indicates that supplemental correspondence from a transportation consultant confirming that the Project Site qualifies as a Very Low Vehicle Travel Area will be provided.

RESPONSE TO STAFF COMMENT

Staff correctly notes that the appeal includes supporting attachments, but the summary does not acknowledge that the updated SCAG-based transportation analysis confirms Very Low VMT eligibility and directly resolves the primary basis for the Director’s density reduction. This updated modeling is the only SCAG-compliant analysis in the record and must be considered. The supporting materials also include alternative fire-access concepts and statutory analyses that demonstrate feasible mitigation exists. These items collectively establish that the findings required to reduce density under State law were not met.

4. "Reservation of Rights" — The Appellant states the appeal does not waive any legal rights and that they reserve all remedies under the Housing Accountability Act, Density Bonus Law, Permit Streamlining Act, and other applicable laws.

RESPONSE TO STAFF COMMENT

Staff's summary is accurate. The reservation of rights simply preserves all remedies available under State housing law and does not alter the substance of the appeal.

Subsequent to filing of the appeal application, the Appellant provided the City additional information, via email, to support his contentions. This information is also included in Exhibit B.

In accordance with BMC § 10-1-1907.2(A), the appeal is being brought before Planning Commission ("Commission") to hold a de novo hearing to consider and act on the project application and appeal. The Commission's decision will be final and will not be subject to any further appeal.

Relevant California Laws to Consider

The Appellant's contentions reference several California Laws associated with the processing of housing development applications. For informational purposes, this section provides a summary of relevant state laws.

CA DensitYBonus Law (CA Government Code § 65915 — 659J8)

California's Density Bonus Law, codified in CA Government Code § 65915 through 65918, requires cities and counties to grant additional development incentives when a housing project includes qualifying affordable units or other eligible components, such as senior housing, student housing, or projects owned by qualified nonprofits. The law is designed to increase housing production — particularly deed-restricted affordable units — by permitting developments to exceed local zoning limits through additional density, reduced parking requirements, and relief from development standards that would otherwise physically preclude construction. The amount of bonus density granted is tied to the number and level of affordable units provided, with larger affordability commitments yielding greater density bonuses and additional incentives or concessions. Jurisdictions must approve a qualifying project's requested bonuses. Additionally, requested incentives, concessions, and waivers must be approved unless a jurisdiction makes written findings that a request would cause a specific, adverse impact on public health or safety that cannot be mitigated, violate state or federal law, or negatively affect protected historic resources. Incentives and concessions may also be denied if the request does not result in identifiable and actual cost reductions to provide affordable housing or affordable rents.

Below are relevant sections of the law related to the Appellant's points that will be referenced in the "Discussion" section of this report:

1. *No Maximum Cap on the Number of Units, Unlimited Density [CA Government Code § 65915(f)(3)(D)(iii)]* — Under the CA Density Bonus Law, a housing

development that meets eligibility requirements may request unlimited residential density — meaning there is no maximum cap on the number of allowed units. When this provision applies, standard density limits in the municipal code do not limit the total number of units, and local agencies must allow the request for increased density. A jurisdiction may not deny or reduce the project's density on the basis of local zoning or General Plan standards if the following qualifying criteria are met:

a. One hundred percent of all units in the development, but exclusive of a manager's unit or units, need to be for lower-income households. Except that up to 20 percent of the units in the development may be for moderate-income households; and

b. The housing development needs to be located in a very low vehicle travel area. “Very Low vehicle travel area” is defined in CA Government Code § 65915(o)(10) and “means an urbanized area, as designated by the United States Census Bureau, where the existing residential development generates vehicle miles traveled per capita that is below 85 percent of regional ... or [local] vehicle miles traveled...”

A project would have to meet both criteria above to qualify for unlimited residential density. [3]

RESPONSE TO STAFF COMMENT

The summary of Density Bonus Law is generally accurate, but two clarifications are necessary. First, the appeal does not challenge the statutory criteria; it demonstrates that the Project meets them. The development is 100 percent affordable (aside from a manager’s unit) and, based on updated SCAG modeling documented in the Iteris memorandum, the site qualifies as a Very Low VMT Area. When both conditions are satisfied, State law—not local zoning—establishes the right to unlimited density. Second, the appeal is not premised on any local standard; it relies on the controlling State statute, which requires approval at the proposed density once eligibility is confirmed.

2. *No Vehicle Parking Standards, Zero Parking* [CA Government Code § 65915(p)(3)] – The CA Density Bonus Law allows qualifying housing developments to provide zero on-site parking when they meet qualifying criteria under the Density Bonus Law. When these conditions are met, a local jurisdiction must permit the project to forgo all on-site parking requirements and may not impose additional local parking standards, unless it can make legally supported findings related to public health or safety pursuant to state law. This provision supersedes local zoning codes and parking requirements. To qualify, a project would need to satisfy the following:

a. One hundred percent of all units in the development, but exclusive of a manager's unit or units, need to be for lower-income households. Except that up to 20 percent of the units in the development may be for moderate-income households; and

b. In addition, one of the criteria below must be met:

1. The development is located within one-half mile of a major transit stop; Or

2. The development is a for-rent housing development for individuals who are 55 years of age or older; or

[3] Other qualifying criteria for unlimited density exist but are not relevant to this Project. *(See, e.g.,* Cal. Govt. Code § 65915(f)(3)(D)(ii)).

3. The development is either a special needs housing development or a supportive housing development.

RESPONSE TO STAFF COMMENT

Staff's summary accurately lists the statutory provisions, but it omits the key point raised in the appeal: the Project meets the criteria for zero parking under State law. The Project is 100 percent affordable, and its eligibility is triggered not by proximity to transit or age-restricted housing, but by its location in a Very Low VMT Area as demonstrated by updated SCAG modeling in the Iteris memorandum. Once that criterion is met, the City may not impose on-site parking requirements. The appeal does not request an exemption beyond what the statute provides; it simply applies the mandatory provisions of State law to the confirmed VMT data.

Housing Accountability Act (CA Government Code § 65589.5)

The Housing Accountability Act (HAA) limits the ability of local governments to deny, reduce the density of, or impose conditions that make housing development projects infeasible when they comply with objective development standards. Prior to denying a project or reducing the density of a project that otherwise meets applicable objective general plan, zoning, and subdivision standards, cities must make written findings, supported by a preponderance of the evidence on the record, that both of the following conditions exist:

1. The housing development project would have a specific, adverse impact upon the public health or safety unless the project is disapproved or approved upon the condition that the project be developed at a lower density. A "specific, adverse impact" means a significant, quantifiable, direct, and unavoidable impact, based on objective, identified written public health or safety standards, policies, or conditions as they existed on the date the application was deemed complete *MCA Government Code § 65589.5(j)(1)(A)].*

2. There is no feasible method to satisfactorily mitigate or avoid the adverse impact identified, other than the disapproval of the housing development project or the approval of the project upon the condition that it be developed at a lower density *CA Government Code §* 65589.5(j)(1)(B)].

In addition, the HAA also establishes certain review timeframes local jurisdictions must consider when processing housing development project applications.

RESPONSE TO STAFF COMMENT

The summary of the Housing Accountability Act is generally accurate, but it omits two points central to the appeal. First, the HAA protects projects that comply with objective standards or that qualify for waivers under State law; because the Project's proposed density is permitted under Government Code §65915 when Very Low VMT eligibility is met, the City may not reduce density unless the statute's stringent health-and-safety findings are made. Second, neither the Director's Decision nor the staff report identifies any specific, adverse, unavoidable health or safety impact supported by substantial evidence. The appeal explains that feasible mitigation measures exist for the issues cited, and the presence of feasible mitigation precludes reliance on the HAA to reduce density.

Specific Adverse Impacts of the Proposed Project Upon the Public Health or Safety
As previously stated, it was determined by the IDRC and found by the Director that the Proposed Project cannot be built without specific, adverse impacts upon the public health or safety. Specifically, the Proposed Project failed to address necessary fire mitigation measures set forth in the California Fire Code for fire access and lanes to ensure adequate emergency response for the protection of life and property. Therefore, as already stated, the Director approved the Proposed Project with conditions of approval, including that it be developed at a lower density.

DISCUSSION

Housing Accountability Act Findings of a Specific Adverse Impacts Upon the Public Health or Safety
Under the Housing Accountability Act, a decision to approve a housing development at a density lower than proposed must be supported by written findings that are backed by a preponderance of the evidence in the administrative record (Gov. Code § 65589.5(j)(1)). In this case, the Director approved the Proposed Project subject to conditions — including a reduced density — necessitating that such findings be made. The findings are included below.

1. *The housing development project would have a specific, adverse impact upon the public health or safety unless the project is disapproved or approved upon the condition that the project be developed at a lower density. As used in this paragraph, a "specific, adverse impact" means a significant, quantifiable, direct, and unavoidable impact, based on objective, identified written public health or safety standards, policies, or conditions as they existed on the date the application was deemed complete [CA Government Code § 65589.5(j)(1)(A)].*

   The Proposed Project seeks approval of a 75-unit, six-story residential development at a proposed overall height of 65 feet, on a residential street that is 60 feet wide and dead ends approximately 80-feet to the southwest of the Project Site. This proposed density is nearly seven times the maximum allowable density of 11 units, based on the Burbank2035 General Plan standards with density bonus

permitted pursuant to CA Government Code § 65915(f)(3)(D)(i)[4]. The Proposed Project cannot provide the requisite fire access or mitigation measures required by the California Fire Code (CFC), thereby creating a specific, significant, quantifiable, and unavoidable adverse impact on health and safety (Exhibit J).

Specifically, CFC Section 503 requires that fire apparatus access roads be provided for every facility or building where any portion of the structure is located more than 150 feet from approved fire apparatus access, measured along an approved route. Portions of the building of the Proposed Project are located more than 150-feet from code complaint fire apparatus access and it fails to provide required fire apparatus access roads as required under the law.

Inadequate fire apparatus access roads prevent firefighting personnel from adequately accessing structures during a fire or life-threatening emergency. Given the proposed location of this development, and the recent devastating wildfires within the southern California region, it is imperative that this development contain appropriate fire mitigation measures as required under the applicable local and state fire and life safety codes. The Proposed Project as designed does not have code compliant fire apparatus access roads. Given the height of the Proposed Project and the structure size, the lack of a code compliant fire apparatus access road is a substantial danger to the community. If the Proposed Project were built as designed, the occupants of the development and neighboring structures would be at a high risk of death or serious injury if a fire were to occur. Fire personnel would be unable to access the entire building as it extends beyond 150 feet from the only access road, Linden Avenue. With a lack of mitigation measures in place to combat a fire, the structure and neighboring structures would be at risk of destruction. As we have seen in Altadena and Pacific Palisades, California in 2025, entire communities are at risk of being destroyed if Fire personnel are unable to effectively combat fires. The Proposed Project's inability to provide for life saving fire mitigation measures as required pursuant to the CFC and BMC pose an unavoidable life safety issue for the potential occupants and the community.

[4] As explained in the "Staff Responses to Appellant Points" below, the Project qualifies for a density bonus of 80% of the number of units for lower income households, rather than unlimited density.

Additionally, mid-rise and high-rise buildings must be accessible from a minimum of two sides (BMC § 9-1-9-504.3.1). The Proposed Project qualifies as a mid-rise building and fails to provide access from two sides. The Proposed Project's mid-rise structure only provides access from Linden Avenue, a 60-foot-wide, dead-end residential street that allows access for a single-firefighting truck at one-time. In large structure fires, multiple firefighting vehicles may need access. The CFC further requires fire apparatus access roads meet a minimum unobstructed width of 26 feet (exclusive of shoulders), and that obstructions not impede firefighting and rescue operations. The Proposed Project does not provide this minimum unobstructed width on the site and thus does not meet these mandatory health and safety standards, and its violations of the CFC creates specific adverse impacts on health and safety in the surrounding single and multi-family neighborhoods.

The Project Site is on a 60-foot-wide street along the 50-foot-wide front property line, and the rear property line abuts a 20-foot alley, both of which terminate at “dead ends" approximately 80 feet to the east/west/north/south of the Project Site. As proposed, portions of the building would be located more than 150 feet from a fire apparatus access road, and the building configuration does not allow for fire apparatus accessibility along two sides. Accessibility is critical for firefighting personnel to manage emergencies beyond what a sprinkler system can handle, particularly with highly combustible materials, and to ensure life safety for occupants. In dense neighborhoods, such as the Proposed Project site, fire sprinklers are ineffective at preventing the spread of fires to structures or communities that are within close proximity. To better contain a fire from spreading to other structures in close proximity, the CFC and BMC require the appropriate fire apparatus access road be provided, which the Proposed Project as designed does not do. These deficiencies result in a direct and unavoidable conflict with written public health and safety standards, thereby constituting a “specific, adverse impact" to public health and safety as defined under State law.

To avoid this adverse health and safety impact, the Proposed Project was denied and alternatively, the Director Approved the Project, as Conditioned based on a redesign at a reduced density and scale of 11 residential units that is built to comply with the California Fire Code and the requirements in the Burbank Municipal Code. At this density and scale, the footprint and design of the Approved Project as Conditioned conform to fire access requirements and avoid the significant life and safety hazards identified. The Approved Project as Conditioned, at the reduced density and scale, ensures consistency with applicable fire safety regulations and protects the public health and safety of future residents of the proposed development and the surrounding single- and multifamily residential neighborhood.

RESPONSE TO STAFF COMMENT

Staff’s findings under the Housing Accountability Act substantially overstate the record and do not satisfy the statute’s narrow and well-defined standard. A “specific, adverse impact” must be significant, quantifiable, direct, and unavoidable, based on an objective health-and-safety standard in effect when the application was deemed complete. None of the assertions in the Director’s Decision meet this definition.

The appeal explains that the Project does not violate any objective fire-safety standard that is incapable of feasible mitigation. Alternative fire-access layouts, including a recorded emergency vehicle access easement, hydrant relocation, a hammerhead-T turnaround, overhead clearance adjustments, and required striping and signage, are all viable and commonly used solutions permitted under the California Fire Code, including its

provisions for equivalent methods. The staff report does not analyze or acknowledge these feasible mitigation measures. Under the HAA, if a feasible mitigation exists, the City is prohibited from reducing density.

Staff's analysis also conflates unresolved technical comments with unmitigable health-and-safety impacts. Density cannot be reduced merely because further coordination with Fire or Public Works will be required at plan check; the HAA does not permit density reduction to resolve routine code-compliance details that are standard components of ministerial building review.

In addition, the findings rely on generalized references to regional wildfire events and speculation about hypothetical catastrophic scenarios. The HAA does not allow reliance on generalized concerns or theory-based risks; the City must identify a quantifiable, unavoidable conflict with a specific written standard. That has not occurred. The Director's findings do not engage with the applicant's proposed mitigations, do not quantify the alleged impacts, and do not explain why mitigation would be infeasible. This does not satisfy the statutory test.

Finally, the findings were made before the City was provided with the updated SCAG-based transportation analysis that confirms Very Low VMT eligibility. Once Very Low VMT status is established, unlimited density is permitted under State law. Fire-access refinements must therefore be evaluated in the context of ministerial plan review and equivalent-methods provisions, not used as a basis to reduce density.

2. *There is no feasible method to satisfactorily mitigate or avoid the adverse impact identified pursuant to paragraph (1), other than the disapproval of the housing development project or the approval of the project upon the condition that it be*

developed at a lower density [California Government Code Section 65589.5(j)(1)(B)].

There is no feasible method to satisfactorily mitigate or avoid the identified adverse fire, life and safety impacts of the Proposed Project, other than through disapproval of the project or approval conditioned upon a reduction in density and scale. The CFC requires that fire apparatus access roads provide emergency access within 150 feet of all portions of a structure (CFC § 503), and that mid-rise and high-rise buildings be accessible from a minimum of two sides with unobstructed aerial apparatus access of at least 26 feet in width (BMC § 9-1-9-504.3.1, Appendix D of CFC § D105.2)[5]. The Proposed Project does not allow for emergency access within 150 feet of all portions of the development structure, nor are there two sides with unobstructed aerial apparatus access of at least 26 feet in width as designed. The only way to meet these fire, life and safety requirements is with a lower density and reduced scale of development.

The Proposed Project at 75 units in a six-story configuration, based on the proposed project's size and building envelope, cannot be redesigned to comply with these requirements without a substantial reduction in density. As previously noted, the Project Site is a 9,184 square foot interior lot directly adjacent to two similarly zoned residential lots along its side property lines, and with street frontage along West Linden Avenue and a rear yard abutting an existing 20-foot-wide alley. The Proposed Project configuration with portions of the structure located more than 150 feet from fire apparatus access fails to allow for the required two-side accessibility. These deficiencies present direct and unavoidable conflicts with objective fire safety standards that cannot be mitigated through project conditions, design changes, or the imposition of alternative measures at the proposed scale of 75 units.

Accordingly, the only method to avoid or reduce the adverse health and safety impacts and comply with applicable CFC requirements is to approve the project at a lower density and scale of 11 residential units that is built to a scale that complies with the Approved Project, as Conditioned. At this reduced density and scale, the resulting building footprint can accommodate the necessary fire apparatus access requirements, thereby eliminating the identified fire safety hazards and ensuring consistency with applicable public health and safety standards.

RESPONSE TO STAFF COMMENT

The conclusion that "no feasible method" exists to mitigate the cited fire-access issues is not supported by the record and does not meet the Housing Accountability Act's strict evidentiary standard. Under Government Code §65589.5(j)(1)(B), density may only be reduced if the City demonstrates, based on substantial evidence, that no feasible mitigation or alternative compliance method is available. The appeal shows—and the staff report does not meaningfully refute—that multiple feasible mitigation options exist.

The applicant provided a feasible emergency vehicle access easement, a

hammerhead-T turnaround configuration, a relocated private hydrant, revised Fire Department Connection placement, and obstruction-clearance solutions. These are standard tools expressly contemplated in the California Fire Code, which permits alternative means and equivalent methods when supported by engineering judgment. Staff's analysis does not evaluate these solutions, does not explain why they would be infeasible, and does not cite any objective standard that they would fail to meet.

Feasibility cannot be defined by whether the project can meet fire-access requirements without any modification; the question under the HAA is whether the impact can be mitigated through reasonable design changes. It can. The record contains no analysis showing otherwise. Instead, staff concludes infeasibility solely because the 75-unit layout had not yet been revised to incorporate the proposed mitigation. This misstates the legal framework. Under the HAA, conceptual mitigation demonstrating feasibility is sufficient at the entitlement stage; technical refinement occurs during ministerial plan check once density is established.

The claim that the only way to mitigate impacts is to reduce density also contradicts the Density Bonus Law, which requires approval of unlimited density once Very Low VMT eligibility is met and prohibits the City from denying waivers needed to physically accommodate that density unless the City can show an unmitigable specific adverse impact. The required finding of infeasibility therefore cannot be supported without first evaluating and rejecting the applicant's proposed equivalent-methods solutions, which the City did not do.

Accordingly, the conclusion that "no feasible method exists" is not supported by substantial evidence in the record and does not satisfy Government Code §65589.5(j)(1)(B).

Staff Responses to Appellant Points

The following section provides a response to the appellant's points. The appeal letter is included as Exhibit B to this report.

Aerial Fire Apparatus is a general term that can describe various types of apparatus, including aerial ladder, elevating platform, water tower apparatus. The City of Burbank Aerial Ladder has a power-operated, hydraulically operated. 10-foot ladder, for rescue operations, ventilation of upper floors, and delivering elevated master streams.

“Grounds for Appeal”
Responses to the Appellant's first claim is divided into Points 1-A through 1-D.

Point 1-A: The Appellant asserts that the Director's Decision unlawfully reduced the project's density from 75 residential units to 11 residential units.

City Staff conducted extensive review of the project proposal and identified several inconsistencies with local and state law, and applicable objective standards. Staff notes that the Director did in fact approve the project at a reduced density of 11 units pursuant to HAA in an effort to promote housing. The Director issued the required written findings supporting that determination. As documented in the Director's Decision and restated in this report, per the HAA, the City identified specific, adverse impacts upon public health and safety supported by a preponderance of the evidence — most notably relating to emergency vehicle access and fire-code compliance. Given the recent local climatic conditions, including devastating regional fires, compliance with the fire-code is necessary to save lives. Therefore, the Director made the requisite findings prior to conditioning the project at a reduced density.

RESPONSE TO STAFF COMMENT

The appeal does not dispute that the City must make HAA findings when reducing density; it demonstrates that the findings issued do not meet the statutory standard. The HAA requires a specific, adverse, unavoidable impact supported by substantial evidence and an explanation of why feasible mitigation is not available. The Director’s findings rely on generalized fire-safety concerns, do not evaluate the feasible mitigation measures provided, and do not identify a specific written standard that the project cannot meet through alternative compliance. Because feasible mitigation exists, State law prohibits density reduction. The appeal therefore correctly asserts that the Director’s action constitutes an unlawful reduction of density under the HAA.

Point 1-B. The Appellant asserts that the project is entitled to unlimited density under the CA Density Bonus Law. As documented in the Director's Decision (Exhibit H) the project does not qualify for “unlimited density” because it does not meet the requirements under the CA Density Bonus Law. Specifically, the Project Site is not located within a Very Low Vehicle Travel Area as defined in CA Government Code § 65915(o)(10) because the existing residential development in the area near the project does not generate vehicle miles per capita (VMT) that is below 85 percent of the regional or local average in accordance with data available to the city and provided by the Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG). SCAG is the regional transportation planning agency that maintains a computerized travel demand model that produces local and regional statistics about vehicle miles traveled. The Appellant submitted a memo prepared by a transportation consultant that asserts that the Project Site is located within a Very Low Vehicle Travel Area (contrary to the data provided by SCAG) but the memo provides no evidence or justification showing why SCAG's data is incorrect. Staff's response to the Appellant's memo is included as Exhibit I. As previously discussed, pursuant to CA Government Code § 65915(f)(3)(D)(i) the Project may be eligible for an 80% density bonus on top of the 6 residential units allowed in the underlying zoning

designation. This would allow for a total of 11 permitted units, including the density bonus.

In addition, the Appellant asserts that the project is entitled to incentives and waivers under the CA Density Bonus Law and that any local development standards that would preclude the 75 residential unit design must therefore be waived. Staff agrees. In fact, the Director's Decision acknowledges in the Conditions of Approval (Condition of Approval No. 14, Exhibit H) that the development can request incentives and waivers subject to meeting the qualifying criteria in CA Government Code § 65915(d) and (e).

RESPONSE TO STAFF COMMENT

The appeal does not claim unlimited density applies regardless of circumstances. It explains that unlimited density applies when a project is 100 percent affordable and located in a Very Low VMT Area. Updated SCAG modeling, validated by Iteris, confirms the site meets the VMT threshold. Once these conditions are satisfied, the Density Bonus Law requires approval of the proposed density and prohibits reliance on local zoning limits. Staff's analysis uses pre-update or non-SCAG data and therefore does not reflect the governing facts. Under State law, eligibility for unlimited density has been met.

Point 1-C. The Appellant asserts that the project is entitled to provide zero on-site parking under the California Density Bonus Law on the basis that the Project Site is located within a Very Low Vehicle Travel Area. Staff disagrees. As documented in the Director's

Decision (Exhibit H), the project does not qualify for zero required parking because it does not meet all of the statutory criteria necessary to invoke that provision of CA Government Code § 65915(p)(3). For reference, the qualifying criteria was included in the "Background" section of this report. Being located in Very Low Vehicle Travel Area is not a qualifying criterion for zero parking under the CA Density Bonus Law, and moreover, as discussed earlier in the report, the Project Site is not located within a Very Low Vehicle Travel Area anyway.

RESPONSE TO STAFF COMMENT

The appeal does not assume Very Low VMT eligibility; it demonstrates it with updated SCAG model outputs and the Iteris technical memorandum, which uses the regionally adopted SCAG travel demand model required by State and local policy. The City's earlier determination relied on older data that differed by only a fractional margin from the threshold and did not reflect the updated SCAG model results now in the record. Once the updated data is applied, the site clearly qualifies as a Very Low VMT Area under Government Code §65915(o)(10). State law does not permit reliance on superseded or incomplete data when certified regional modeling is available.

Point 1-D: The Appellant asserts that the Project can meet fire access requirements through alternative compliance under the California Fire Code by recording an emergency vehicle access easement over the alley, striping and posting the alley as a fire lane, and installing a hydrant and fire department connection. According to the Appellant, the Fire Code authorizes approval of such alternative materials and methods, and this approach would allow the Project to maintain its proposed density without modification.

Staff disagrees. The Burbank Fire Department Fire Marshall has reviewed the Appellant's proposed fire access configuration, including the "Conceptual Fire Lane / Hydrant / FDC Plan Sheet" submitted with the appeal (Exhibit B), and determined that the proposed design is infeasible and inconsistent with applicable life-safety requirements under the California Fire Code and the Burbank Municipal Code. The alley does not meet minimum required fire apparatus access road dimensions, turning radii, load capacity, or unobstructed access standards needed to ensure adequate emergency response. The proposed design also assumes physical and operational conditions that cannot be guaranteed or enforced through easements alone, including limitations posed by existing utilities, right-of-way constraints, private property access, and conflict with existing service access needs for adjacent properties.

Alternative materials and methods under the California Fire Code may only be approved where they provide an equivalent level of fire and life safety. Based on its review, the Fire Department determined that the proposed alternative does not provide equivalent emergency access and therefore cannot be approved. Accordingly, the proposed fire access configuration cannot serve as a basis to support the project at the requested configuration and density of 75 residential units. The Burbank Fire Department's response

to the Appellant's request is included as Exhibit J.

RESPONSE TO STAFF COMMENT

The appeal does not assert that the project as initially sketched meets all fire access requirements; it asserts that feasible and code-authorized mitigation exists and must be evaluated before density can be reduced under the HAA. The applicant provided an emergency vehicle access easement, hammerhead-T turnaround configuration, hydrant adjustments, and obstruction-clearance solutions. These are standard tools recognized under the California Fire Code's provisions for equivalent methods. Staff's analysis does not address these proposals or explain why they would be infeasible. Under the HAA, unresolved technical details or the need for further fire coordination cannot justify density reduction where feasible mitigation exists. Density must therefore be preserved, and fire-access refinements must proceed during ministerial plan review.

Responses to this Appellant point were divided into Points 2-A through 2-D.

Point 2-A: The appellant requests that the Planning Commission vacate the Director's Decision. Staff disagrees with this request. As detailed throughout this staff report, the Director's Decision to approve the project at a reduced density is supported by a preponderance of the evidence demonstrating that the original 75-unit proposal was inconsistent with multiple applicable objective standards in the Burbank Municipal Code and failed to satisfy necessary fire access and life-safety requirements under the California Fire Code, thereby creating a specific, adverse impact to public health and safety that cannot be mitigated without decreasing the density. The Applicant declined to revise the project plans to address these inconsistencies, despite receiving written direction identifying the required modifications needed to achieve compliance. In addition, the project does not meet the criteria for unlimited density outlined in CA Government Code § 65915(f)(3)(D)(iii) and described earlier in this report.

The Director's conditioned approval of an 11-unit development provides a project design that satisfies applicable objective development standards and resolves identified adverse impacts to public health and safety. The reduced-density approval ensures that the project can be constructed while maintaining compliant emergency access, fire protection measures, and related public safety requirements.

Based on the analysis and findings presented in this staff report, staff finds no basis to overturn or modify the Director's Decision.

RESPONSE TO STAFF COMMENT

The appeal does not request that the Director's Decision be vacated for procedural reasons, but because the findings required to reduce density under the Housing Accountability Act were not lawfully made. Density may only be reduced where the City identifies a specific, adverse, unavoidable health-and-safety impact and demonstrates that no feasible mitigation is available. The Director's Decision does

not meet that standard. Because the findings do not comply with State law and were based on incomplete VMT data, the appeal properly seeks to vacate the decision and secure review under the correct statutory framework.

Point 2-B: The Appellant requests that the Planning Commission recognize the Project Site as being located within a Very Low Vehicle Travel Area pursuant to the CA Density Bonus Law. Staff disagrees with this request. As documented in the Director's Decision (Exhibit H), and throughout this report, the Project Site is not located within a Very Low Vehicle Travel Area as defined by CA Government Code § 65915(o)(10).

RESPONSE TO STAFF COMMENT

The appeal does not ask the Commission to create a new interpretation of VMT standards; it requests application of the controlling statute using the correct regional data. Updated SCAG modeling presented by Iteris establishes that the Project Site is located in a Very Low VMT Area. The City's earlier determination relied on older or incomplete data. Once updated SCAG data is applied, the Project satisfies Government Code §65915's VMT criterion, and State law mandates the resulting entitlements. This is a factual issue governed by SCAG data, not discretionary judgment.

Point 2-C. The Appellant requests that the Planning Commission establish that the project shall be approved ministerially, without City discretion and a by-right approval, at the proposed 75-unit density. Staff disagrees with this request. The project is not eligible for ministerial approval under the BMC, California Density Bonus Law (CA Government Code § 65915), the Housing Accountability Act (CA Government Code § 65589.5), the Permit Streamlining Act (CA Government Code § 65920 et seq.), or any other provision of State housing law applicable to this application. No statutory framework cited by the appellant establishes otherwise. The Project went through the appropriate discretionary application process as established by State Law and the BMC.

RESPONSE TO STAFF COMMENT

The appeal does not request discretionary approval of a 75-unit project. It requests ministerial approval because, once Very Low VMT eligibility is confirmed and the Project meets the affordability requirements, State Density Bonus Law requires approval of the proposed density and obligates the City to grant waivers necessary to physically accommodate it. The appeal explains that the City's reduction to 11 units is inconsistent with Government Code §65915 and the Housing Accountability Act. Ministerial approval at the proposed density is therefore the legally required outcome, not a request for discretionary relief.

Point 2-D. The Appellant requests that the Planning Commission accept the proposed fire lane, hydrant, and Fire Department connection configuration as an objective compliance method that would allow the project to proceed at the originally proposed 75-unit density. As stated earlier in this report, the Fire Department determined that the proposed configuration does not provide adequate emergency access and therefore cannot be approved.

RESPONSE TO STAFF COMMENT

The appeal's reference to emergency vehicle access alternatives is not a request for the Commission to approve detailed fire-engineering plans. It demonstrates that feasible mitigation exists and therefore that the City cannot lawfully reduce density under the Housing Accountability Act. The proposed alternatives—including an emergency vehicle access easement, hammerhead-T turnaround, hydrant relocation, and obstruction-clearance adjustments—are standard compliance tools under the California Fire Code. These concepts are intended for refinement during ministerial plan review. Their feasibility directly rebutted the City's claim that density must be reduced to address fire access, and therefore they were properly included as part of the appeal.

"Supporting Record"

In support of the appeal, the Appellant submitted several attachments. The Appellant also indicated that supplemental correspondence from a transportation consultant would be provided. City staff acknowledges receipt of these materials, including the supplemental correspondence from the transportation consultant. They were reviewed in preparation for the appeal hearing and considered as part of staff's evaluation and recommendation to the Planning Commission and attached as Exhibit B.

RESPONSE TO STAFF COMMENT

Staff's description of the supporting record is generally accurate, but incomplete. The appeal materials include not only prior correspondence and statutory references, but also updated SCAG-based transportation modeling prepared by Iteris that directly resolves the VMT eligibility question. This modeling uses the required regional dataset and demonstrates that the site clearly qualifies as a Very Low VMT Area. Because VMT eligibility is central to State Density Bonus Law and the Director's density reduction, the updated transportation analysis is a critical part of the record and materially changes the factual basis on which the Director's findings were made.

"Reservation of Rights"

The Appellant indicates that the filing of the appeal does not waive any legal rights and expressly reserves all remedies available under the Housing Accountability Act, Density Bonus Law, Permit Streamlining Act, and all other applicable State and local laws. City staff acknowledges the Appellant's stated reservation of rights.

RESPONSE TO STAFF COMMENT

Staff's summary of this portion of the appeal is correct. The reservation of rights simply preserves the applicant's ability to pursue remedies under State housing laws should they become necessary. It does not modify the substance of the appeal or the relief requested, and it does not impose any procedural burden on the City or the Commission.

INTERDEPARTMENTAL REVIEW

The project application and plans were reviewed by the City's Inter-Departmental Review

Committee (IDRC) for consistency with all applicable objective standards, including but not limited to the BMC and the California Fire Code. Following review, staff issued City Comment Letters on July 10, 2025, and August 8, 2025, identifying multiple inconsistencies with the BMC and required fire-safety measures. The Applicant responded with written statements but declined to revise the project plans to address these issues. As a result, the Director approved the project with conditions to ensure compliance with all applicable objective standards and public health and safety requirements (Exhibit H). Those requirements are reflected in the Project's Conditions of Approval.

RESPONSE TO STAFF COMMENT

This summary omits important context and inaccurately characterizes the Applicant's actions. The Applicant did not "decline to revise" the plans; the Applicant explained that the items identified—particularly fire apparatus access—are technical matters that are addressed during ministerial plan check once the legally required project density is established. The Applicant responded to each comment letter, submitted statutory waiver requests, and provided multiple feasible fire-access alternatives, none of which were evaluated in staff's analysis. These matters are not tied to density and are routinely resolved through objective plan-check procedures. Under State law, unresolved technical comments cannot serve as a basis to reduce density, nor can they support the conclusion that no feasible mitigation exists.

PUBLIC NOTIFICATION AND INPUT

Public notice for the Planning Commission hearing was provided in accordance with State and local law. Notices were mailed to all property owners and tenants within a 1,000-foot radius of the Project Site, a public notice was published in the Burbank Leader newspaper, and a notice was posted on the site at least 10 business days prior to the Planning Commission hearing. The public notice included information about the Project description, the reason for the public notice, and how the public can get involved in providing comments or learning more about the Project. As of the publication of this report, staff has received several public comments opposing the project. They are included as Exhibit K.

RESPONSE TO STAFF COMMENT

Staff's description of the noticing procedures is accurate in terms of process, but it omits an important legal distinction. The appeal concerns a project that must be processed ministerially under State law once its statutory criteria are met. Ministerial projects do not involve discretionary judgment and do not rely on public input when determining compliance with objective standards. While public comment is procedurally permitted as part of the appeal hearing, it cannot serve as a basis for approving or denying the project. Any objections or concerns raised by neighbors must still be evaluated solely within the constraints of objective standards and State housing law. To the extent the staff report references general opposition received, such comments cannot legally influence the outcome of a ministerial Density Bonus project governed by State law.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

Planning Commission's approval of the Approved Project, as Conditioned is categorically exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) under CEQA Guidelines Section 15332 (In-Fill Development Projects). The Approved Project, as Conditioned, would result in the demolition of an existing single-family residence and construction of a new 11-unit residential development that is built to a scale that complies with the California Fire Code and the applicable requirements in the Burbank Municipal Code. It is consistent with the applicable Burbank2035 General Plan land use designation and policies, as well as with the applicable zoning designation and regulations; it will occur within City limits on a project site of no more than 5 acres (0.21 acre site) surrounded by urban uses; is on a site that has no value as habitat for endangered, rare of threatened species; will not result in significant effects relating to traffic, noise, air quality, or water quality; and, is proposed on a site that can be served by all required utilities and public services. Therefore, the Approved Project, as Conditioned, qualifies for this exemption and there are no special circumstances that would preclude the use of this exemption.

RESPONSE TO STAFF COMMENT

Staff relies on a CEQA exemption applicable to an 11-unit project, but the appeal demonstrates that the reduction to 11 units was not legally permissible under State housing law. Once Very Low VMT eligibility is confirmed and the proposed density is required to be approved under Government Code §65915, the correct environmental analysis must be tied to the project as it must be approved—not the reduced-density version. Furthermore, State law provides that Density Bonus projects receiving by-right approval and qualified waivers are evaluated only against objective standards; speculative fire-safety concerns or unresolved technical coordination issues do not constitute substantial evidence of a CEQA exception. Nothing in the record identifies a legally supported basis for concluding that the proposed density would trigger a CEQA exception that overrides the State's direction to process the project ministerially.

CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis in this staff report and the evidence supporting the Director's Decision to approve the project at a reduced density, as conditioned, staff finds no basis to overturn or modify the Director's Decision. The Applicant declined to revise the project plans to address identified inconsistencies with applicable objective standards in the BMC, comply with the California Fire Code, and necessary fire mitigation measures required to ensure adequate emergency response and the protection of public health and safety. As conditioned, the approved project limits the development to 11 residential units consistent with State Density Bonus law and requires full compliance with the California Fire Code and all applicable objective standards, thereby resolving the specific, adverse impacts identified during project review.

Therefore, staff recommends that the Planning Commission adopt the attached Resolution denying the appeal and upholding the Director's Decision approving the Development Review and Density Bonus application for an 11-unit residential development at 257 West

Linden Avenue, subject to all Conditions of Approval noted in Exhibit A. The Commission's action will be final and not subject to further appeal.

RESPONSE TO STAFF COMMENT

Staff's conclusion relies on assumptions that are not supported by the record and does not apply the governing State statutes correctly. The assertion that the Project cannot be approved at the proposed density is premised on two findings under the Housing Accountability Act: (1) that the Project creates a specific, adverse, unavoidable health-and-safety impact, and (2) that no feasible mitigation exists. As detailed in the appeal and throughout these responses, neither finding meets the statutory standard.

The Director's determination was made before the updated SCAG modeling and transportation analysis were provided. Those updated regional data confirm that the Project Site qualifies as a Very Low VMT Area, which triggers mandatory unlimited density under Government Code §65915. Once that criterion is met, the City may not rely on local zoning limits or unrelated technical comments to reduce density.

Staff's conclusion also repeats assertions regarding fire apparatus access but does not address the multiple feasible alternative compliance methods presented. The California Fire Code expressly permits equivalent methods of compliance, and the applicant has identified solutions that are routinely accepted in urban infill development. The existence of feasible mitigation legally precludes a finding that density must be reduced.

Routine technical coordination issues—such as utility adjustments, fire lane configuration, or clarifications during plan check—do not constitute unmitigable health-and-safety impacts under State law. They are addressed the same way they are for every ministerial housing project: through the objective plan-check process after the entitlement density is established.

Because the necessary findings under the HAA were not lawfully made, and because updated SCAG modeling confirms statutory eligibility for unlimited density, State law requires approval of the Project at the proposed 75-unit density. Staff's recommendation to uphold the Director's Decision is therefore not supported by substantial evidence and is inconsistent with State housing law.

List of Exhibits	
Exhibits	Title
A	Draft Resolution
B	Appeal Application, Supporting Materials and Additional Applicant Correspondence
C	Zoning and Fair Political Practices Act Compliance Map, Aerial Photographs and Site Photos

D	Application Materials
E	Completeness Letter
F	City Comment Letters
G	Applicant Responses to City Comment Letters
H	Community Development Director's Decision
I	CDD Transportation Division's Response to an Appellant Submitted Memo Prepared by a Transportation Consultant
J	Fire Department's Response to the Appellant's Proposed Fire Access Configuration and “Conceptual Fire Lane / Hydrant / FDC Plan Sheet”
K	Public Comments

APPLICANT REBUTTAL TO EXHIBIT A
(Draft Resolution Findings and Conditions of Approval)

This rebuttal identifies the key areas where Exhibit A contains factual inaccuracies, incomplete analysis, or incorrect application of State housing law. Because Exhibit A would serve as the Commission's adopted findings if approved, it is important to clarify the portions of the document that lack evidentiary support or rely on legal conclusions inconsistent with the Housing Accountability Act and Density Bonus Law.

1. Very Low VMT Eligibility
   Exhibit A concludes that the project site does not qualify as a Very Low Vehicle Miles Traveled Area. This conclusion is based on HELPR's rounded, simplified values rather than the SCAG regional travel demand model that the City is required to use under its own Transportation Analysis Guidelines. The Iteris memorandum presents updated SCAG model outputs showing the TAZ generates VMT per capita significantly below 85 percent of the regional average in both 2019 and 2025. These results confirm that the project meets the statutory definition under Government Code section 65915(o)(10). The draft findings do not acknowledge this data, nor do they provide competing model outputs. As a result, the draft Resolution's VMT determination is not supported by substantial evidence.

2. Fire Access Feasibility and Mitigation
   Exhibit A states that no feasible fire access mitigation exists and that the project must be reduced in density to comply with the California Fire Code. This conclusion is not supported by the record. The applicant presented several objective, feasible mitigation measures, including an emergency vehicle access easement along the alley, a hammerhead turnaround configuration, strategic placement of hydrants and the FDC, minor building footprint adjustments, and achievable utility relocation to provide vertical clearance. These are standard infill solutions and can be evaluated under the alternative materials and methods provisions of the Fire Code. Exhibit A does not analyze any of these measures or explain why they would be infeasible. Because feasible mitigation exists, staff's HAA finding of an unavoidable health or safety impact is not supported.

3. Density Bonus Eligibility
   Exhibit A asserts that the project does not qualify for unlimited density. This conclusion is premised entirely on the erroneous determination that the site is not in a Very Low VMT Area. Once the correct VMT determination is applied, the project qualifies for the unlimited density provision under Government Code section 65915(f)(3)(D) and related subsections. Therefore, the draft Resolution's density conclusion rests on an incorrect legal foundation.

4. Characterization of Plan Revisions
   Exhibit A states that the applicant declined to revise plans to address staff's comments. This characterization is inaccurate. The applicant submitted statutory analyses, waiver requests, and conceptual fire-access solutions, and explained that technical refinements occur during ministerial plan review after approval, consistent with State law governing affordable housing projects. The refusal to process these materials under the required ministerial pathway was staff's choice, not a failure by the applicant.

5. Conditions of Approval
   Exhibit A includes Conditions of Approval premised on an 11-unit project rather than the 75-unit project proposed and appealed. These conditions assume that State Density Bonus Law does not apply and incorporate design constraints and performance standards tied to the reduced-density configuration. As the applicant is not pursuing the 11-unit project, these conditions are not relevant to the appeal and cannot serve as findings against the proposed density.

Several conditions also rely on fire-access assumptions that have not been evaluated against the applicant's proposed mitigation measures, including the emergency vehicle access easement, hydrant layout, and hammerhead configuration. Because the draft conditions assume infeasibility rather than evaluating alternatives, they cannot be used to support a density reduction under the Housing Accountability Act. The City must base any conditions of approval on the proposed 75-unit project and the available mitigation options, not on an alternative project design that the applicant is not seeking to build.

Additionally, several conditions impose requirements that would be addressed during ministerial plan check, such as detailed Fire Code compliance, utility adjustments, trash collection arrangements, and construction staging. These are standard post-entitlement matters and do not justify the density reduction embedded in the conditions.

Conclusion

Exhibit A contains findings and conditions of approval that are unsupported by the record and inconsistent with governing State law. The conclusions regarding VMT eligibility, fire access feasibility, density bonus entitlement, and alleged failure to revise plans rely on assumptions not substantiated by evidence. Because feasible mitigation exists for fire access, and because updated SCAG modeling confirms Very Low VMT status, the Housing Accountability Act prohibits a density reduction. The draft Resolution should not be adopted in its current form, and the appeal should be granted. The project should proceed at the density allowed under Government Code section 65915, with technical fire and site-access refinements addressed during standard plan review procedures.

REBUTTAL TO EXHIBIT I – TRANSPORTATION INTERPRETATION MEMORANDUM

(Transportation Interpretation Memorandum by Assistant Community Development Director Kriske)

This rebuttal addresses several incorrect assumptions and conclusions in Staff's analysis of the Iteris memorandum. The points below identify where the Staff memo misstates State law, misapplies SCAG guidance, or overlooks the methods and results presented by Iteris using the SCAG RTP/SCS model required under the City's own Transportation Analysis Guidelines.

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1. Staff relies exclusively on outdated HELPR 3.0 values rather than the SCAG model required by City guidelines

The City's Transportation Analysis Guidelines require use of the **SCAG RTP/SCS travel demand model**, not HELPR's simplified, rounded, and heavily generalized web interface. Iteris complied with the City's required methodology. Staff did not.

HELPR is not a regulatory tool; SCAG explicitly warns that it contains:
• rounded values,
• simplified lookup tables, and
• data not intended for parcel-level determinations.

SCAG reiterated to Iteris that updated model runs must be used when performing zone-level analysis. Iteris followed that directive.

The City's reliance on HELPR alone is therefore incomplete and not a valid basis to dispute Iteris' model results.

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2. Staff misstates the statutory criterion under Government Code 65915(o)(10)

Gov. Code §65915(o)(10) requires that existing residential development generate VMT per capita below 85% of the regional or city average.

The statute does not require:
• use of HELPR,
• use of 2019-only data,
• ignoring updated model runs,
• integer-only values, or
• disregarding more recent SCAG model outputs.

Iteris' 2019 and 2025 analyses, using the official SCAG RTP/SCS model, show the project TAZ is approximately 35% below the regional average.

A ~35% reduction is not marginal. It is decisive.

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3. Staff incorrectly asserts Iteris "did not identify the method or source" of the lower VMT values

This claim is inaccurate. The Iteris memorandum:

- identifies the SCAG 2024 RTP/SCS travel demand model,
- specifies that both 2019 and 2025 base-year scenarios were used,
- states that the modeling method divides home-based VMT by resident population,
- conforms to the City's Transportation Analysis Guidelines (12/1/2020), and
- includes SCAG documentation links showing the model's source data.

This is a standard modeling process used throughout Southern California.

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4. Staff misinterprets the relationship between HELPR and SCAG model output

HELPR uses rounded model outputs and does not include scenario adjustments for:

- post-COVID trip behavior,
- telecommuting increases,
- regional mode shifts, or
- SCAG's updated socioeconomic data.

The SCAG model used by Iteris does incorporate these factors.

Differences between HELPR and SCAG model output are *expected* and have been confirmed by SCAG to Iteris and to numerous jurisdictions across the region.

Therefore, Staff's argument that HELPR "conflicts" with the model results misunderstands how SCAG intends these tools to be used.

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5. Staff's argument about "false precision" misapplies OPR guidance

Staff asserts that OPR's guidance on model tolerance "does not apply" because CEQA and Density Bonus Law differ.

This is incorrect.

The issue is not CEQA—it is modeling reliability, which applies universally. SCAG's own documentation confirms:

• zone-level outputs are subject to statistical variation,
• values should not be interpreted to the second decimal, and
• integer-level interpretation is appropriate.

Iteris' results—showing reductions of roughly 35%—are far beyond the threshold where precision matters.

Even using integer-only values, the project TAZ is significantly below 85% of the region.

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6. Staff incorrectly states that the project TAZ has a VMT of "18" without acknowledging the SCAG model's far lower value

Staff chooses the HELPR integer (18) but disregards the actual model result of approximately 13, which Iteris obtained directly from the SCAG model runs.

The SCAG model is the legally relevant data source—not HELPR's rounded values.

The City cannot selectively choose the higher, older, rounded value while ignoring the required model.

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7. Staff does not address the updated SCAG model results showing the project area is well below both regional and city VMT averages

Iteris shows:

• 2019: ~12.9 miles per capita vs. 20.7 regional average (about 38% lower)
• 2025: ~12.3 miles per capita vs. 18.8 regional average (about 35% lower)

These results mean:

• the project area is unambiguously a low-VMT area,
• the reduction is not near the threshold but far below it, and
• this satisfies Government Code §65915(o)(10).

Staff provides no contrary modeling analysis—only criticism of format.

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8. Staff erroneously states "no evidence" supports Iteris' findings, when in fact Iteris supplied the only full SCAG-compliant modeling analysis in the record

Staff:

- does not run the SCAG RTP/SCS model,
- does not provide any recalculation or updated verification,
- relies solely on HELPR snapshots,
- provides no alternative model outputs, and
- offers no technical rebuttal of Iteris' methodology.

Under the Housing Accountability Act, the City must base findings on substantial evidence in the record, and Exhibit I does not meet that standard.

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9. Staff's conclusion that the project is "not within a Very Low Vehicle Travel Area" is unsupported by the modeling evidence

All available evidence—including SCAG model runs, HELPR's own recognition that the TAZ is below average, and standard interpretation practices—supports the conclusion that the project TAZ is well below the 85% threshold.

Therefore, the project qualifies under Government Code §65915(o)(10) and is entitled to the associated density and parking provisions.

Conclusion

Exhibit I does not refute the Iteris findings. It relies on a simplified and outdated tool, applies the statute incorrectly, overlooks SCAG's required modeling methods, and offers no technical analysis of its own. Iteris' memorandum remains the only complete, SCAG-compliant modeling analysis in the record, and it demonstrates that the project TAZ is well within the definition of a Very Low Vehicle Travel Area.

The conclusion in Exhibit I is not supported by substantial evidence, and cannot lawfully be used to deny the project's density under Government Code §65915 or the Housing Accountability Act.

REBUTTAL TO EXHIBIT J - STAFF'S FIRE AND LIFE-SAFETY FINDINGS
(Summary of Feasible Alternatives Demonstrating No Basis for Density Reduction)

This appeal concerns whether the City may reduce the project's density under the Housing Accountability Act (HAA). The HAA allows a density reduction only if the City can demonstrate, with substantial evidence, that the project creates a significant, quantifiable, unavoidable public-safety impact and that there is no feasible method to mitigate that impact other than lowering density. Based on the record, this standard is not met. Multiple feasible fire-access solutions exist that allow the project to move forward at the proposed density.

1. Alternative Means and Methods Are Available and Routinely Approved
   The California Fire Code (CFC) allows the Fire Code Official to approve alternative methods that provide equivalent fire protection. These include on-site private hydrants, upgraded NFPA 13 sprinkler systems, enhanced standpipe and hose-reach strategies, additional FDC locations, improved fire-rated assemblies, and an operational response plan tailored to the site. These approaches are routinely used in Southern California on constrained infill parcels and demonstrate that feasible mitigation exists.

2. Two-Sided Access Is Not Required in All Situations
   Staff's conclusion assumes that two-side aerial access is a universal requirement. It is not. Aerial operations are required only when the Fire Department determines they are necessary for the specific building. Many mid-rise, fully sprinklered buildings rely on single-side access, which is permissible when the primary fire attack strategy is interior suppression supported by standpipes and sprinklers. Linden Avenue already functions as a compliant fire lane, and required hose-reach distances can be satisfied through modest design adjustments.

3. Alley Access Is Feasible But Not Legally Required for Density Approval
   Even if the alley were found to be infeasible at this stage, alley access is not a prerequisite for approving the project's density. If the alley is used, it can be improved through standard measures such as restrictions on parking, trimmed or relocated utilities, improved pavement, red-curb markings, and enforceable management plans. More importantly, the City must evaluate fire access as it will exist after improvements—not as it appears today. Fire access refinements are typically addressed during plan review and not used to deny or reduce density at entitlement.

4. On-Site Fire Access Adjustments Are Achievable Without Reducing Units
   The building layout can be modified without reducing density. Adjustments may include a fire access court, hammerhead maneuvering area, reoriented stair towers, refined setbacks, or strategic placement of hydrants and FDCs. These are commonly accepted design tools that maintain full density while satisfying fire operations.

5. Interior Firefighting Operations Are a Recognized Code-Compliant Strategy
   Modern mid-rise apartment buildings are designed for interior fire attack. Sprinklers, standpipes, hose-reach compliance, and protected corridors allow fire personnel to operate from within the structure rather than relying on ladders positioned at multiple exterior faces. These methods are standard and code-compliant and are used in many jurisdictions where external access is limited.

6. The HAA Standard Is Not Met Because Feasible Mitigation Exists
   The HAA prohibits density reduction when any feasible mitigation method exists. Here, multiple mitigation paths are available. The City has not demonstrated that mitigation is infeasible, nor has it evaluated the applicant's proposed solutions in the manner required by law. Because mitigation options clearly exist, the City may not lawfully reduce density.

Conclusion

The fire and life-safety issues cited in the Director's decision are mitigable using standard, accepted fire-code practices. None require lowering the density of the project. Because feasible mitigation exists, State law does not permit the density reduction imposed by staff. The appeal should therefore be granted and the project allowed to proceed at the proposed density, with fire-access refinements resolved during the normal plan review process, consistent with how similar infill housing projects are handled throughout California.

FIRE ACCESS SUPPLEMENT – TECHNICAL SUMMARY

This supplement addresses the fire access concerns referenced in the staff report and Exhibit J. It is provided to clarify that the issues cited are design-level matters that are resolved during plan check and do not prevent the 75-unit project from complying with the California Fire Code. These items do not constitute unmitigable health-and-safety impacts under State law.

1. Hose Reach and 150-Foot Access

Staff states that portions of the building extend beyond 150 feet from the fire access point. This is a common condition for mid-rise multifamily developments in constrained urban lots. Compliance is typically achieved through one or more standard measures:

• adjustment of the fire lane alignment
• fire-rated construction or increased structural protection
• interior standpipes or enhanced sprinkler distribution
• hose reach alternatives permitted under the Fire Code

These are typical plan-check refinements, not entitlement barriers, and staff has not demonstrated that compliance cannot be achieved.

2. Two-Side Access Requirement

The requirement for access from two sides is met through several recognized methods other than a dedicated on-site fire road on each elevation. Options include:

• compliant aerial access via the primary frontage
• fire-protected pathways or easements
• alternative methods permitted under Section 104.9 of the Fire Code when strict application is impractical but equivalent protection is provided

The Fire Code expressly allows equivalent alternatives when physical constraints exist. Staff has not evaluated any of these options.

3. Alley Access Considerations

The alley behind the site offers the potential for an auxiliary access point. Concerns about temporary obstructions such as trash bins are not a basis for a finding of unavoidable adverse impact. Obstructions are regulated operationally and are not part of compliance

FIRE ACCESS SUPPLEMENT – TECHNICAL SUMMARY

with the Fire Code's geometric access requirements. Local agencies routinely condition alley management rather than reduce project density.

4. Applicable Alternatives Under the Fire Code

Multiple compliance paths exist and are commonly approved in similar mid-rise projects. Examples include:

- reconfiguration of fire lanes
- use of approved fire turnouts or hammerheads
- installation of on-site standpipe systems
- localized structural hardening on upper floors
- access easements over adjoining frontage
- enhanced sprinklers and hose valve locations
- application of CFC Section 104.9 allowing alternatives providing equivalent fire protection

None of these alternatives were considered or analyzed by staff.

5. Conclusion

Every fire access issue identified by staff is a standard plan-check engineering matter with multiple feasible technical solutions. None of the cited issues are tied to the number of units proposed, and none constitute a specific, adverse, quantifiable, unavoidable impact as defined under the Housing Accountability Act. The record does not demonstrate that mitigation is infeasible. Density reduction is therefore not supported under State law.

257 W. Linden Avenue – Summary of Burbank's Documented Affordable Housing Need

State-Required Housing Needs (Regional Housing Needs Assessment, "RHNA," 2021–2029 Cycle)
The Regional Housing Needs Assessment (RHNA) is a State-mandated process requiring every city in California to plan for a specific number of new homes across all income categories during each eight-year cycle.

For the 2021–2029 RHNA cycle, the City of Burbank is required to plan for 8,772 new homes, including:
• 2,553 very-low-income units
• 1,418 low-income units
• Additional units in moderate and above-moderate categories

Based on the City's most recent RHNA progress reporting, Burbank has produced:
• 3 very-low-income units (out of 2,553 required)
• 377 low-income units (out of 1,418 required)

This leaves a remaining need of approximately 3,550 lower-income units still to be produced during the current RHNA cycle.

2. Findings from the City's Housing Element and Consolidated Plan
   The Housing Element and the Consolidated Plan (2025–2029) are City-adopted policy documents required by the State and by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). These documents assess local housing conditions and community needs.

Key findings from these documents include:
• "Burbank faces a shortage of affordable housing; demand far exceeds supply."
• 56.4 percent of renters are cost-burdened, meaning they pay more than 30 percent of their income toward housing.
• 31.1 percent of renters are severely cost-burdened, paying more than 50 percent of their income for housing.
• The City has identified 258 individuals experiencing homelessness in Burbank, with many more in the surrounding San Fernando Valley.
• The Consolidated Plan identifies an ongoing need for investment in affordable and supportive housing.

3. Availability of Existing Affordable Units
   Local affordable housing providers, including the Burbank Housing Corporation, report:

- No immediate vacancies in their affordable housing stock
- More than 300 affordable units fully occupied
- Wait times of two to five years for an affordable unit to become available

These conditions illustrate a clear shortage of available affordable units within the city.

4. Relevance to the 257 W. Linden Project
   - The City continues to have significant unmet RHNA obligations for very-low-income and low-income households.
   - The proposed 75-unit, 100 percent affordable housing development would meaningfully contribute to meeting these obligations.
   - A reduced 11-unit version would provide only a negligible contribution and would not materially advance the City's stated housing goals.

Summary
City-adopted housing documents demonstrate a substantial shortage of affordable housing in Burbank, significant renter cost burdens, long wait times for affordable units, and large remaining RHNA obligations. The proposed 75-unit affordable housing project at 257 West Linden Avenue would directly support the City's documented needs and policy commitments.

TECHNICAL MEMORANDUM

To: Sam Aslanian Sam Aslanian Architect, Inc.	**From:** Iteris, Inc. 801 S. Grand Avenue, Suite 750 Los Angeles, CA 90017
Date: September 24, 2025	
RE: Travel Modeling Services for 257 West Linden Avenue, Burbank, California	

This memorandum presents Iteris' Transportation Assessment of a proposed development project located at 127 Wets Linden Avenue in Burbank, CA. This analysis will utilize the SCAG 2024 RTP/SCS travel demand model, per the City of Burbank Traffic Analysis Guidelines.

Firm Qualifications

Iteris team members are experts in the fields of transportation planning, traffic engineering, and ITS. Knowledge of these practice areas enables Iteris to provide comprehensive services ranging from initial traffic impact studies, transportation modeling, planning, systems engineering, and detailed design, through implementation and performance measurement/monitoring. Iteris combines the knowledge of transportation planners, transportation engineers, systems engineers, system integrators, and software engineers to offer an unmatched combination of talent and experience. Within California Iteris has extensive travel demand model development and application experience applying, modifying, developing, and analyzing multiple travel demand models. Specific modeling has been completed utilizing all of the current Southern California region models (SCAG, OCTA, RivTAM, SBTAM, VCTM, ICTM). Iteris has used these models to support various projects, including VMT studies, general plan updates, long-range planning efforts, transportation strategic plans, environmental project support, traffic impact analysis, fee nexus and traffic impact fee studies, corridor studies, and local project developments.

Background

Figure 1 illustrates the location of the proposed project as part of the SCAG 2024 RTP/SCS travel demand model. Within the regional model, the project is within Transportation Analysis Zone (TAZ) 20645400.

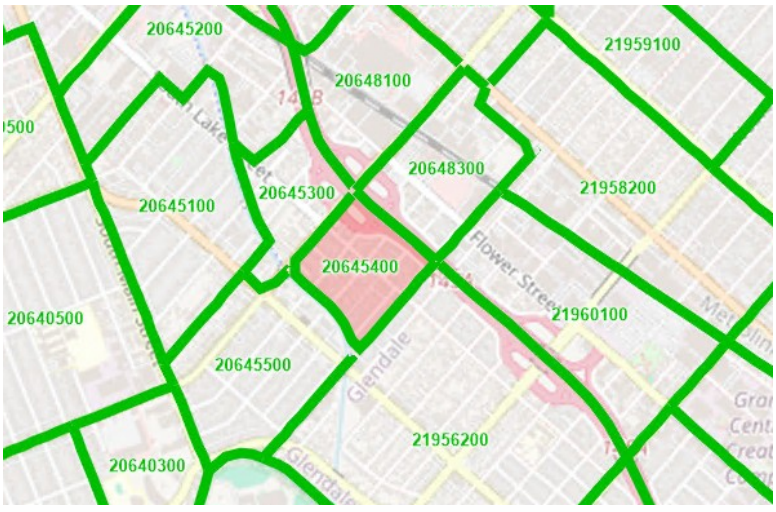

Figure 1: Proposed Project's TAZ Location

Methodology

Iteris utilized the 2019-year and 2025-year travel demand model scenario from the current SCAG RTP/SCS travel demand model to prepare a CEQA-level Transportation Assessment of the project zone (without the proposed project). SCAG is the Southern California Association of Governments and is the designated MPO for the region. The use of the SCAG RTP/SCS travel demand model is commonly used for CEQA VMT studies, and is the regional model designated in the City of Burbank Transportation Study Guidelines (dated 12/1/2020) for these activities.

CEQA analysis is summarized as VMT, which is an area-wide performance measure which helps compare the overall performance of a project or project alternatives and is also used as a metric to ultimately assess the transportation environmental impacts of a project. Following standard professional practice, TAZ-level automobile VMT was divided by resident population to develop per-capita VMT, which was then compared against the SCAG regional per-capita VMT average. SB743 VMT summary data was developed for the following geographies:

- Total project Traffic Analysis Zone (TAZ) automobile VMT (non-truck)
- Total City of Burbank automobile VMT (non-truck)
- Total County of Los Angeles automobile VMT (non-truck)
- SCAG Six County region LA automobile VMT (non-truck)

In addition to summarizing the raw model outputs, Iteris reviewed the SCAG VMT tool (HELPR 3.0) for reasonableness checking. The Housing, Environment, and Land Use Parcel Tool (HELPR) 3.0, developed by SCAG, is an interactive web-mapping platform that supports local jurisdictions and stakeholders in evaluating land use patterns, development potential, and environmental considerations in relation to regional objectives. Its data is sourced from *Connect SoCal 2024* (link), SCAG's Regional Transportation Plan and Sustainable Communities Strategy. More information is available through the HELPR tool at https://rdp.scag.ca.gov/helpr/. The document can be also found at https://rdp.scag.ca.gov/helpr/helpr-documentation.pdf .

This methodology is consistent with statewide guidance and standard practice, including Office of Planning and Research (OPR)'s 2018 Technical Advisory on Evaluating Transportation Impacts in CEQA, Caltrans procedures, and peer jurisdictions such as the City of Los Angeles.

SB743 VMT Analysis

The SCAG VMT tool was used to estimate VMT by trip purpose for six counties, the City of Burbank in Los Angeles County, and TAZ 20645400, which encompasses the project area. Total home-based VMT per capita was then calculated for each geography. This analysis was conducted for both 2019 and 2025 and the results are summarized in **Table 1**.

Table 1. Total Home-based VMT per Capita Calculated Using the SCAG RTP/SCS Model

Model Year	Metric	SCAG Region	LA County	Burbank	Project TAZ (TAZ 20645400)	TAZ VMT Comparison to Region
2019	Total Home-based VMT	390,849,238	176,849,430	1,435,387	15,410	
	Total population	18,825,496	10,043,399	107,885	1,194	
	Total home-based VMT per capita	*20.76*	*17.61*	*13.30*	*12.91*	*-37.8%*
2025	Total Home-based VMT	358,673,530	161,383,802	1,326,289	14,162	
	Total population	19,075,895	10,047,932	107,583	1,155	
	Total home-based VMT per capita	*18.80*	*16.06*	*12.33*	*12.26*	*-34.8%*

**Note: Small decimal differences in modeled outputs are expected, as the model is a statistical tool. Therefore, comparing at the first or second decimal is likely too refined of an analysis for the regional model to estimate.*

It should be noted that the home-based VMT includes all trip purposes including work, shopping, school, university, and recreation. As summarized in **Table 1**, total VMT per capita declined from 2019 to 2025, which is reasonable given the rise in remote work following COVID 19. Additionally, in both the 2019 and 2025 data, the project TAZ (TAZ 20645400) both indicate a low VMT area, with the zone greater than 30% reduction when compared with the regional average.

As mentioned earlier, the HELPR tool was also used as an additional resource to validate the model results. **Table 2** completes a summary of calculated SCAG model VMT analyses and HELPR tool VMT values.

Table 2. Total Home-based VMT per Capita Calculated Using the SCAG HELPR Web-Based Tool

Model Year	Metric	SCAG Region	Project TAZ (TAZ 20645400)	TAZ VMT% of Region
2019	*Total home-based VMT per capita*	*21*	*18*	*-14.3%*

Note: As mentioned as a footnote in Table 1, the regional model is most likely able to present VMT results at the integer level (not including decimals). This is evidenced by the HELPR tool values summarized in **Table 2.*

As summarized in **Table 2**, At the SCAG regional level, HELPR reports an average regional home-based VMT per capita of 21, which closely aligns with the model output of 20.76 in the 2019 data (it should also be noted that HELPR presents rounded values without decimals). However, at the project's TAZ level, HELPR estimates VMT per capita at 18, compared to 12.91 as calculated directly from the SCAG model. While the HELPR estimate is near the low-VMT area threshold (-14.3%), it does fall within reasonable rounding error as the values in HELPR are heavily rounded to a single digit.

- As an example, if the project VMT per capita was rounded up to 18 from 17.5, then using 17.5 compared to the region would show a reduction of 16.6%

Conclusion

In conclusion, the SB743 VMT analysis, based on both the SCAG travel demand model and the HELPR tool, provide consistent evidence that the project area qualifies as a low-VMT area under Gov. Code § 65915(p)(2). At the regional level, HELPR results closely match the SCAG model outputs, further validating the model's

reliability. Although some differences were observed at the TAZ level, both sources place the project area within the low-VMT threshold, confirming that travel behavior in the project zone generates fewer home-based VMT per capita relative to regional averages. Importantly, the finding is not marginal – the project TAZ is approximately 35% below the SCAG regional per-capita VMT average, based on the most current model outputs.

Taken together, these findings indicate that the project area is not anticipated to result in significant transportation-related environmental impacts under CEQA.

SCAG 2019 Regional Travel Demand Model – Context for VMT Classification

The attached excerpts from the *SCAG Regional Travel Demand Model and 2019 Model Validation Report (Published March 2024)* provide the Commission with the foundational basis for how regional Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) metrics—including *Very Low VMT Area* classifications—are generated and validated for all jurisdictions within SCAG's six-county region. This model is the official, state-recognized methodology used by cities, counties, Caltrans, and regional agencies for transportation analysis and VMT determination.

Because the Project's eligibility for unlimited density and zero parking under Government Code §65915 depends on whether the site is located in a *Very Low Vehicle Travel Area*, it is important that Commissioners understand the technical credibility and legal relevance of SCAG's modeling framework.

Why these pages are included

Only **Chapter 1** has been provided for brevity, because it contains the core information needed to understand how SCAG's regional model is developed, validated, and applied. In summary, this chapter explains:

- SCAG's role as the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for the region
- State mandates (including SB 375) requiring SCAG to model and plan for reduced VMT and greenhouse gas emissions
- The Activity-Based Model (ABM) framework used to generate VMT outputs
- The data sources, calibration methods, and validation protocols that ensure the model's reliability
- The use of Transportation Analysis Zones (TAZs), which form the basis for parcel-level VMT classification

These excerpts show that the Iteris memorandum submitted with the appeal is based directly on this officially adopted SCAG model and its validated 2019 base-year network—the same model used for regional transportation planning and environmental analysis throughout Southern California.

Purpose of submission

This material is provided to document that the Project's parcel-specific VMT assessment is grounded in the officially adopted SCAG model and methodology, and to confirm that the determination that the site is in a Very Low VMT Area is consistent with State law and regional practice. No separate or alternative model exists for this purpose.

SCAG Regional Travel Demand Model
and
2019 Model Validation

Published: March 2024

Southern California Association of Governments

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PREFACE

The Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) is a voluntary association of six counties—Los Angeles, Orange, Ventura, Riverside, San Bernardino, and Imperial—and of 191 cities within those counties. SCAG's organizational purpose is cooperative planning and governmental coordination at the regional level. SCAG is mandated by State and federal law to plan and implement a Regional Transportation Plan/ Sustainable Communities Strategy (RTP/SCS) (updated every four years), a bi-annual Federal Transportation Improvement Program (FTIP), and to identify and analyze Transportation Control Measures (TCMs) and Transportation Strategies for incorporation into the South Coast Air Quality Management Plan (AQMP).

The Regional Transportation Model provides a common foundation for transportation planning and decision-making by SCAG and other agencies within the Region. The Year 2019 base year travel data contained in this report will be referenced by, and of interest to, the general public, as well as local, State, and federal agencies involved in transportation planning and traffic engineering. Various state, sub-regional, and local agencies in the SCAG Region also perform travel demand model forecasting for their own transportation planning and engineering purposes. These modeling programs require a high degree of coordination and cooperation with SCAG's Regional modeling program.

Agencies involved in SCAG's model enhancement include the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) Districts 07, 08, 11, and 12. Sub-regional agencies include the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (LA Metro), the Orange County Transportation Authority (OCTA), the Riverside County Transportation Commission (RCTC), San Bernardino County Transportation Authority (SBCTA), the Ventura County Transportation Commission (VCTC), the Imperial County Transportation Commission (ICTC), the County of Orange Environmental Management Agency, and other regional and local transportation agencies. Local agencies include cities and counties within the Region also maintain transportation modeling programs. Several of these agencies have contributed directly to the preparation of SCAG's Year 2019 Model Validation.

This report summarizes the specification, calibration, and validation of the SCAG Regional Transportation Model to the new 2019 base year. Based on the four-year time frame, the base year for SCAG's 2024 RTP/SCS update should be 2020. However, due to unusual travel and traffic conditions during 2024 due to the Covid-19 pandemic, we moved the base year one year back to capture normal traffic and travel condition as the base year for the model calibration and validation. This model update was performed in preparation for the development and evaluation of the SCAG 2024 RTP/SCS. The new modeling capabilities introduced as part of this update address the need for evaluating a wide variety of projects and transportation policies, including the addition of pricing strategies, expansion of existing transit services, introduction of managed lane projects, and land use policies. This updated model has enhanced sensitivities to evaluate the land use and transportation policy scenarios that are envisioned by California's greenhouse gas (GHG) emission reduction legislation, Senate Bill (SB) 375, and meets the requirements and recommendations in the California Transportation Commission's 2017 RTP Guidelines.

The 2024 RTP Model is an Activity-Based Travel Demand Model (ABM). In an ABM, travel emerges from the desire to participate in activities. As such, activities are predicted first, and then travel is generated to link these activities in time and space.

The SCAG ABM is implemented in a micro- simulation framework, which calculates travel metrics (such as traffic flows and transit boardings) by predicting and aggregating the travel behavior of individual persons and households.

The model system addresses the requirements of the metropolitan planning process and relevant State and federal requirements. It is equally suitable for conventional highway and transit projects, and for a wide variety of policy studies such as highway pricing, managed lanes, and travel demand management. The SCAG ABM is a comprehensive, robust, and forward-looking tool that addresses the following requirements:

Produce 24 hours travel demand patterns with the necessary level of temporal resolution. The ABM structure essentially operates in continuous time and simulates a complete day for all individuals in the region. When the ABM is integrated with standard network procedures (highway and transit assignments) the corresponding trips are grouped by time-of-day periods (the implementation schema for all ABMs in practice so far). However, this ABM will also be ready for integration with more advanced Dynamic Traffic Assignment (DTA) operating in continuous time.

Sensitive to future land use, demographics and employment. The ABM structure takes advantage of the details of the synthetic population and addresses demographic changes including population age distribution and household composition, amongst others. The future labor force scenarios and job allocation scenarios are logically integrated starting from the population synthesis. In this regard, future structural shifts in the land-use and employment types will affect all sub-models including the synthetic population itself. All demographic, land-use, and employment inputs also affect tour and trip choices of destination, mode, and time of day.

Sensitive to the implementation of various planning and transportation policies or visions. The ABM and supporting network procedures are designed to address a wide range of policies including different infrastructure capacity improvements and pricing schemes. Beyond the standard sensitivity of mode choice to travel time and cost, the ABM has a rich set of behavioral accessibility measures. Through these measures, the impacts of various policies on car ownership, commuting frequency, daily activity patterns, trip chaining, and joint travel arrangements can be captured.

Sensitive to changes in transportation facilities and services. The ABM is supported by highway assignment and skimming procedures sensitive to the details of transportation facilities and services for highway, transit, and non-motorized modes.

Produce quality information for project evaluation, including the assessment of economic benefits (e.g. variation in travel time and vehicle operation cost) and environmental impacts (e.g. energy consumption, pollutant emissions and greenhouse gases).

The Year 2019 model results have been compared to independent sources of travel data within the Region, such as auto and truck traffic counts, transit boarding counts, Vehicle Miles of Travel (VMT) from Highway Performance Monitoring System (HPMS), speed data from Freeway Performance Measurement System (PeMS), and other travel data. The Regional Transportation Model sufficiently replicates the observed validation data as described herein. As such, the model is validated for use in preparing travel forecasts for the SCAG 2024 RTP/SCS.

Overview of Report

The input data, model enhancements, calibration, validation, and results of each of the modeling components of the SCAG 2019 Regional Model are summarized in the respective chapters:

Chapter 1 – Overview
Chapter 2 – General Design of SCAG ABM
Chapter 3 – Model Inputs
Chapter 4 – Transportation Networks
Chapter 5 – Long Term Choice
Chapter 6 – Mobility Choice
Chapter 7 – Daily Activity Pattern (CDAP)
Chapter 8 – Mandatory Activity Generation and Tour Formation
Chapter 9 – School Escorting and Scheduling Consolidation
Chapter 10 – Fully Joint Tour
Chapter 11 – Individual Non-mandatory Activity Generation
Chapter 12 – Tour Formation
Chapter 13 – Mode Choice
Chapter 14 – Time of Day
Chapter 15 – Heavy Duty Truck Model
Chapter 16 – Trip Assignment

Supplemental information is contained in the following appendices:

Appendix A1 - Highway Network Coding Conventions
Appendix A2 – Auto Operating Costs
Appendix A3 – SCAG Model Peer Review
Acronyms

Chapter 1 Overview

Introduction

SCAG has evolved over the past four decades into the largest of nearly 700 councils of government in the United States. SCAG functions as the Metropolitan Planning Organization for six counties: Los Angeles, Orange, San Bernardino, Riverside, Ventura, and Imperial. The region encompasses a population exceeding 19 million persons in an area of more than 38,000 square miles.

SCAG is the primary agency responsible for the development and maintenance of travel demand forecasting models for the SCAG region. SCAG has been developing and improving these travel demand forecasting models since 1967. SCAG applies the models to provide state of the practice quantitative analysis for the RTP/SCS, the FTIP, and AQMPs. The Regional Model is also used to evaluate other transportation proposals within the region. The model is based on Caliper Corporation's TransCAD modeling software and the latest generation of the Coordinated Travel – Regional Activity Modeling Platform (CT-RAMP3).

This report combines information from several documents and other sources related to the enhancement and validation of the 2019 Regional Travel Demand Model (Regional Model) for Southern California. The Regional Model is managed and operated by the SCAG with development assistance from private consulting firms. The model is one of several tools used by SCAG to forecast land use and travel demand. Expert panels have reviewed the development/enhancement of the SCAG land use and travel demand modeling tools.

Transportation Model Overview

SCAG develops and maintains state-of-the-art transportation models to support SCAG's planning program. These models include:

Activity-Based Model

The Activity-Based Model (ABM) is a new generation of travel demand model. The ABM simulates daily activities and travel patterns of all individuals in the region, as affected by transportation system level of service. This new modeling system is designed to meet or exceed federal regulations and state laws/requirements. The ABM Model is in the late stages of development/testing and is expected to be the primary transportation model used in the development of the 2024 RTP/SCS.

Trip-Based Model

The Trip-Based Model (TBM) has historically been the main demand forecasting tool used by SCAG. Its base year is updated every four years, but otherwise retains the model structure as the 2019 RTP/SCS travel demand model. The TBM was peer-reviewed in May 2011 and found consistent with the state-of-the-practice. SCAG updated TBM for 20RTP/SCS.

Heavy-Duty Truck Model

Southern California Association of Governments developed the Heavy Duty Truck (HDT) model to evaluate policy choices and investment decisions. The HDT model is a primary analysis tool to support the goods movement policy decisions made by SCAG and regional stakeholders.

Air Quality Model

EMFAC is an emission factors model developed by the California Air Resources Board (CARB) for calculating emission inventories for vehicles in California. This is the emission model approved by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) for calculating vehicle emissions for conformity purposes in California.

SCAG Travel Demand Modeling Process

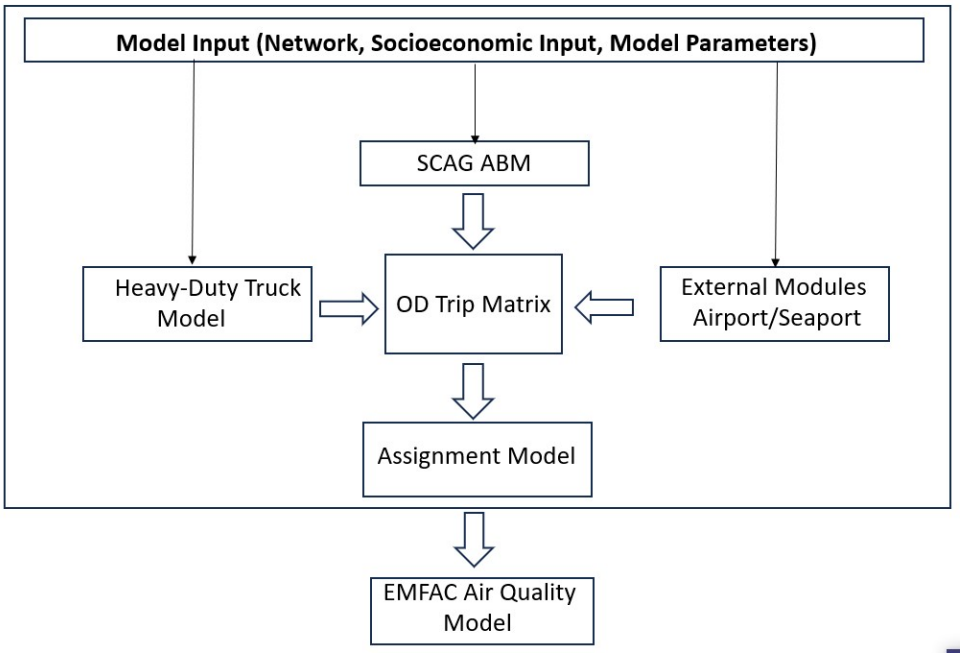
SCAG travel demand process is composed of two main components:

1. SCAG ABM (Coordinated Travel-Regional Activity Modeling Platform – 2nd version) which simulates daily activity participation and scheduling for each individual, with travel being viewed as a derivative of out of home activity participation and scheduling decisions.

2. A network assignment loads vehicles onto appropriate facilities to produce traffic volumes, congested speeds, vehicle-miles traveled (VMT), and vehicle-hours traveled (VHT) estimates for each of the five time periods. The SCAG Travel Demand Modeling process is shown in Figure 1-1. A series of multi-class highway assignment simultaneously loads the vehicle forecasted by

SCAG ABM, pre-calculated OD input matrices (airport, seaport, inter-regional; by passenger vehicles and three classes of heavy-duty trucks from Heavy Duty Truck model.

Figure 1-1 SCAG Travel Demand Process



California SB 375

One of the key factors behind the current model update is California's SB 375 that requires metropolitan areas, such as the SCAG region, to meet regional GHG emission reduction targets for 2024 and 2035.

California Senate Bill 375 and Sustainable Communities Strategies

SB 375 became law in California effective January 1, 2009. This law requires California's Air Resources Board (ARB) to develop regional greenhouse gas emission reduction targets for passenger vehicles for 2024 and 2035 for each region covered by one of the State's 18 MPOs, including SCAG. SB 375 was adopted as an "implementation mechanism" for California's Assembly Bill (AB) 32, the Global Warming Solutions Act, which requires 2024 greenhouse gas emissions statewide to be no higher than 1990 levels.

Each Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) is required to develop a Sustainable Communities Strategy that demonstrates how the region will meet the greenhouse emission reductions specified by the ARB targets through an integrated process that combines land use, housing, and transportation planning. The SCS becomes part of the Regional Transportation Plan.

SCAG's SCS scenarios comprise following strategies:

- Land Use and Growth
- Highways and Arterials
- Transit
- Travel Demand Management (TDM)
- Non-Motorized Transportation System
- Transportation System Management (TSM)
- Pricing

ARB's website for SB 375 is located at:
www.arb.ca.gov/cc/SB 375/SB 375.htm

Overview of SCAG ABM

SCAG Regional Travel Demand Model, or SCAG Activity-Based Model (SCAG ABM), was developed and used for the analysis to SCAG's 2024 RTP/SCS. This model exhibits the following characteristics:

Based on *advanced principles of modeling* individual travel choices with high behavioral realism. The model addresses both household-level and person-level travel choices including intra-household interactions between household members across a wide range of activity and travel dimensions. It predicts travel as emerging from activity participation, using various innovative sub-models, such as a combinatorial mode choice model that predicts tour mode and trip mode simultaneously.

Proven design concept, based on the third generation of the Coordinated Travel – Regional Activity Modeling Platform (CT-RAMP3) framework. The CT-RAMP framework has been evolving since 2005, and it has been *tested in practice* in several regions, including New York, Chicago, the San Francisco Bay Area, Atlanta, Miami, Columbus and Phoenix.

Operates at a *fine level of temporal resolution*, with respect to modeling trip and activity timing and duration. Tour start and end times are modeled in discrete space with 15 min intervals. Subsequently, trip departure times and activity durations are modeled in continuous time. This ensures consistency of the generated activity and travel patterns and schedules at the individual level that are important for modeling congestion, road pricing and peak spreading. This level of temporal resolution also opens the door for integrating the ABM with an advanced network simulation model, such as Dynamic Traffic Assignment (DTA).

Reflects and responds to *detailed demographic and socio-economic information*, including household structure, aging, changes in wealth, and other key attributes observed or expected in the dynamic Southern California region. The SCAG ABM incorporates different household, family, and housing types including a detailed analysis of different household compositions in their relation to activity-travel patterns.

Extensive use of *various accessibility measures*. Accessibility measures are important behavioral components of an ABM that express closeness of the modeled individual to potential locations where the activity "supply" (employment of the corresponding type) is present. Accessibility has a strong impact on individual activity patterns and travel behavior. The SCAG ABM extends commonly used accessibility measures by properly differentiating them by hour of day so that they can be linked to the corresponding time-of-day specific choices.

Accounts for the *full set of existing and planned travel modes*. The SCAG ABM allows for addressing details of different auto modes (distinguished by occupancy), transit modes, taxi, Transportation Network Company (TNC) modes, and non-motorized modes.

The core demand model can be *easily integrated with other components* such as the existing truck model, the model of external travel to and from the region, and eventually, models of non-resident visitor travel, airport travel, and/or special event travel.

Flexibility with respect to the network simulation platform available. This version of the SCAG ABM is implemented in combination with a conventional static assignment, since this is the only network simulation procedure feasible for Southern California region. However, the SCAG ABM structure can provide the *detailed inputs needed by traffic micro-simulation software* for engineering-level analysis of corridor and intersection design. Moreover, when coupled with DTA software, it will be possible to fully integrate transport demand and supply models in one coherent framework based on individual microsimulation. The proposed design of SCAG ABM fully accounts for this future possibility.

Model Enhancements

SCAG ABM has undergone major enhancements to improve its operation and analysis for Connect SoCal 2024. Model enhancements performed specifically for the 2019 Model include refined and re-estimated coefficients for several sub-models using the latest available data, as well as the addition of two new sub-models for future planning and policy analysis.

Sub-model refinements – SCAG revised and re-estimated coefficients of several key sub-models, using currently available data.

New sub-models – for future planning and policy analysis, SCAG added two new sub-models into SCAG ABM model system. Trip departure time – to improve the model sensitivity to policy analysis such as peak hour congestion, enhancement have been made to consistency between activity and travel schedule. New trip departure time choice model was added to SCAG ABM system. SCAG ABM has also incorporated an in-home/out of home choice model for non-mandatory activities- telemedicine and online shopping.

Software has been updated with significant improvements in run time, code optimization, upgraded version of Java (Java18), Java code update, writing outputs to binary format directly.

Tested and documented the ability of activity-based models to restart from intermediate sub-model locations. Useful feature for calibration work and for model application studies.

SCAG implemented version control – with Azure DevOps to efficient tracking of changes made to software code and input data, ensuring versioning and history tracking for better collaboration.

Model has been calibrated and validated using several data sources including CHTS (reweighed for the new base year), 2017 NHTS, 2019 ACS, LEHD 2018, DMV 2019, CTPP 2012-2016, PeMS, Streetlight, Caltrans HPMS and Pems data, SCAG 2017 Screenline Vehicle classification.

Other updates to the model include implementing emerging technologies such as transportation network companies (TNC, micro-mobility), updating heavy duty truck model, updates to TAZ and networks.

The methodologies used to develop key model inputs, such as Auto Operating Cost (AOC), work from home, and telemedicine, have undergone improvement as part of the model enhancement process. These enhancements aim to ensure that the model accurately captures the dynamic

nature of travel behavior influenced by these inputs. Comprehensive research and analysis have been conducted. Please refer to Appendix B for further details.

Re-calibration of the models to targets developed based on a wide range spectrum of timely and local target data.

Additionally, two data collection were conducted in the SCAG region to better understand the impacts of the pandemic on transportation (COVID 19 survey).

Enhancement of sensitivity to potential SCS strategies such as AOC and pricing

Extensive collaborations have been established with various agencies (LA Metro, LADOT) and universities (UC Davis, UCLA, UC Santa Barbara, USC, UC Berkely). SCAG ABM has been successfully integrated with LA County MATSIM model, LA EPISIM – to understand the nonpharmaceutical interventions (NPIs) for COVID 19, and as well as planning tool of CAV model.

SCAG is collaborating with WSP to build an Access Equity Calculator (AEC) add on for the SCAG ABM. The AEC will estimate and visualize transport equity metrics based on "accessibility" of various population groups to life opportunities including employment locations, schools, shopping places, healthcare facilities, local and state parks, and high-quality transit stops.

SCAG successfully incorporated several short-term recommended items into for the final 2024 RTP/SCS.

Auto-Operating Cost (AOC): SCAG conducted comprehensive research to incorporate new data and assumptions into auto operating cost methodology based on comments from CARB. This process was conducted in coordination with modeling departments of other MPOs in California. Please refer to Appendix B1 for details.

Mode choice model has been enhanced to accommodate the changes of future transit route patterns outlined in LA Metro's NextGen bus plan (the full plan deployment is expected to start from 2025). Additionally, an integration of a commuter rail access variable has been introduced to the model to more accurately capture the improvements in service resulting from Metrolink's Southern California Optimized Rail Expansion (SCORE) capital improvement endeavor.

- Transit Access: The effect of transit access, measured as the distance to a bus stop or rail station, is significant on transit ridership and share of trips by transit.
- Transit access areas: based on literature (Ewing and Cervero, 2010; Baily, Mokhtarian, and Little, 2008), SCAG revised the transit access area for high-frequency transit corridors to a radius of 1 mile. Residents residing within the transit access area are more likely to use transit services compared to those residing outside of it. Subsequently, all sub-models using this variable were calibrated after the revision.
- Commuter rail access: Similar to the concept of transit access area, a new *Commuter Rail Access* variable has been formulated to reflect increased usage of commuter rail services among residents residing closer to the stations. To accommodate larger catchment areas associated with commuter rail services, this variable has been created as a weighted average of three distinct distance bands from a commuter rail station: 2 miles, 5 miles and 10 miles.

Bike land density: SCAG added bike-lane density variable to school escorting model and conducted model calibration. This enhancement improves the sensitivity of bike share for school purpose with respect to bike lane infrastructure.

Technical Approach of the Validation Process

Model validation is defined as the process by which base year model results are compared to actual, observed travel pattern data such as traffic counts and transit ridership data. SCAG performs a validation of its transportation model for each planning cycle for the Southern California region. A planning cycle is typically four years, corresponding to the update of the RTP/SCS. The "base year" for the current planning period and model is 2019; the long-term forecast year is 2050.

Model validation is a regular and essential modeling process that supports the development of the RTP/SCS, FTIP, and AQMPs. In the past, SCAG has prepared a model validation report for each of the previous planning cycle model base years: 1980, 1984, 1987, 1990, 1994, 1997, 2000, 2003, 2008, 2012 a 2016 and 2019. The base year of 2019 in the current model replaces the previous base year of 2016.

The SCAG modeling team assembled a wide spectrum of timely and local target metrics for the purpose of model calibration and validation for 2024 RTP/SCS. The main data sources that have been used for ABM sub-model calibration are listed below. It should be noted that from each data source the closest available dataset to the model base-year (2019) has been used.

- California Household Travel Survey (CHTS) of 2011 weighted for 2019 population
- National Household Travel Survey (NHTS) of 2017
- Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics (LEHD)
- American Community Survey (ACS)
- California Department of Motor Vehicles (CADMV)
- Census Transportation Planning Products (CTPP).

For highway and transit assignment validation, the main data sources that have been used are listed below.

- Caltrans Performance Measurement System (PeMS)
- StreetLight
- Replica
- Caltrans Traffic Counts (All Vehicles and Trucks)
- SCAG's 2017 Screenline Vehicle Classification (One Day Field Counts)

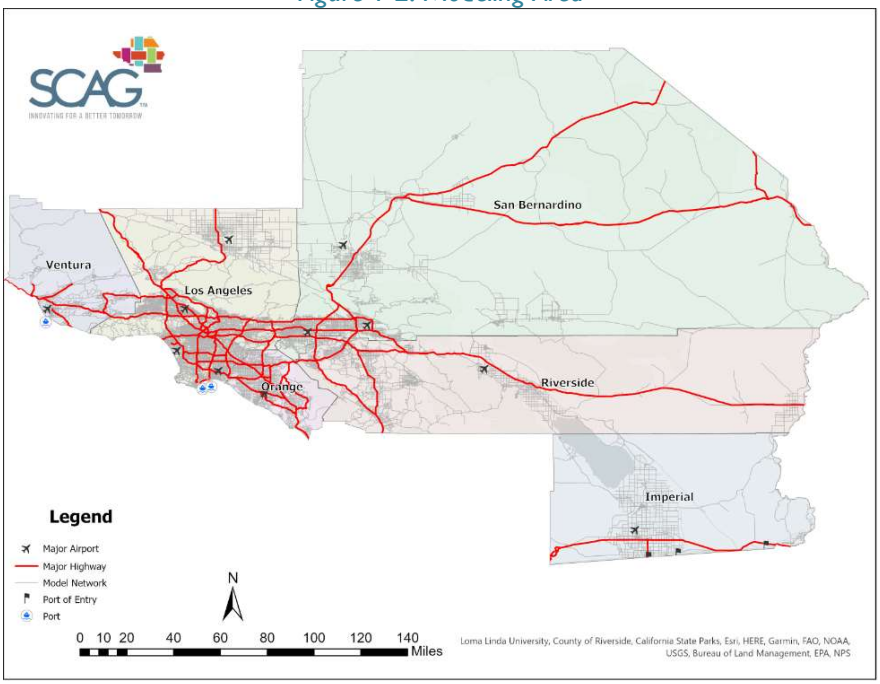
Modeling Area

The modeling area of the SCAG 2019 Regional Travel Demand Model is same as the modeling area of 2019 Model and covers the following six counties in their entirety:

- Imperial County,
- Los Angeles County,
- Orange County
- Riverside County,
- San Bernardino County, and
- Ventura County

Figure 1-2 shows the Modeling Area. The figure also indicates how the modeling area has expanded over time.

Figure 1-2: Modeling Area



Zone System

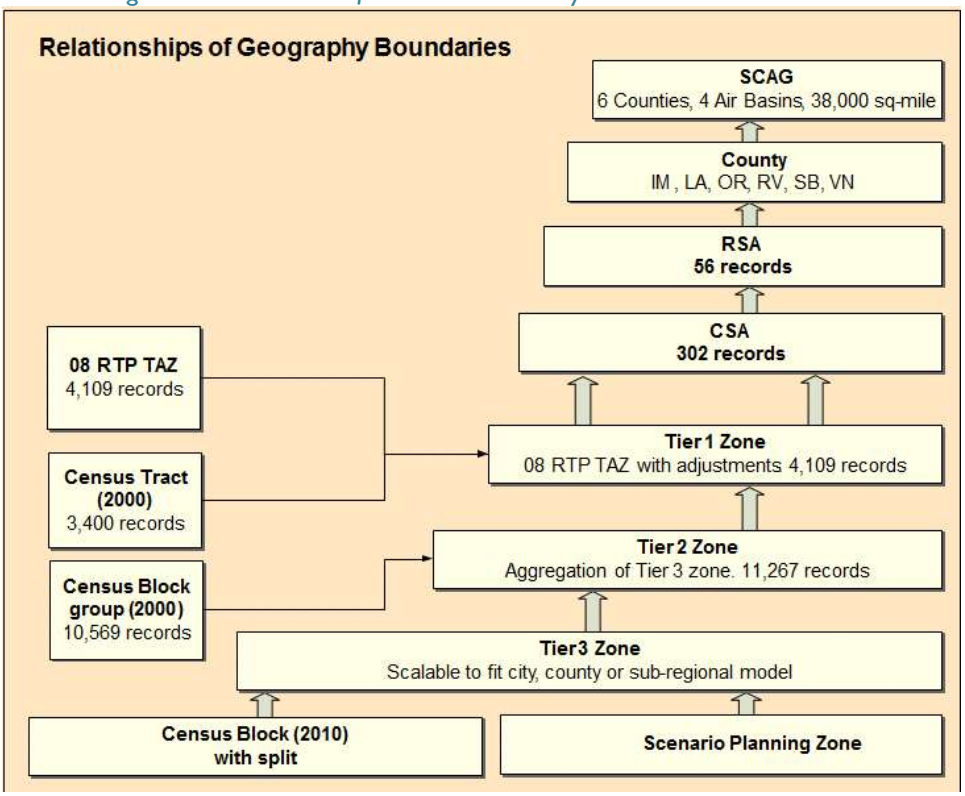
Socioeconomic data and other information for the model are contained in geographically defined areas known as Transportation Analysis Zones (TAZ). The TAZs are attached to the networks using centroid connectors that allow travelers (trips) to access to the transportation system by simulating local and neighborhood streets. They provide the spatial unit (or geographical area) within which travel behavior and traffic generation are estimated. TAZs are ideally, but not always, sized and shaped to provide a relatively homogeneous amount and type of activity.

The SCAG model uses a tiered zone system structure as shown in Figure 1-3 that allows for micro (i.e., neighborhood) and macro-scale (i.e., regional) analysis and reporting. The TAZ structure was last modified in 2021 to enhance the precision of micro-level land use and smart growth analysis for the RTP/SCS. The TAZ modification process involved extensive coordination with sub regional modeling agencies throughout the region. The Regional Model includes two tiers of TAZ. The first tier contains 4,109 internal zones, while the second tier contains 11,267 internal zones. All Tier 2 zones nest within Tier 1 zones. Table 1-1 and 3 provide statistical information and a graphical display of the zone structure. In addition, the Regional Model contains 40 external stations to facilitate modeling of trips to, from, and through the region.

Table 1-1: Geographic Zone Summary

Modeling Area	Regional Statistical Area (RSA)	Community Statistical Area (CSA)	Tier 1 TAZ (Internal)	Tier 2 TAZ (Internal)
Imperial County	1	24	110	239
Los Angeles County	21	175	2,243	5,697
Orange County	10	52	666	1,741
Riverside County	11	49	478	1,532
San Bernardino County	7	44	402	1,395
Ventura County	6	25	210	663
Total	56	369	4,109	11,267

Figure 1-3: Structure of the Tiered Zone System in the SCAG Model



Methodology

A tiered TAZ system was jointly developed by SCAG and its member agencies, based on sub-regional TAZs and SCAG MPUs (Minimum Planning Units) and some splits added according to major road, natural and artificial barriers, satellite photo, land use, and local inputs. TAZ Tier 2 is an aggregation of SPZ (Scenario Planning Zone) and TAZ Tier 1 is an aggregation of TAZ Tier 2 Zones, which matches the total number and general geography of the previous Regional TAZs.

The following provides a description of the principles that guided the development of the new Regional TAZ System. These principles follow standard modeling practice.

> ***Consistency with 2020 TIGER/Line Tract Boundaries*** – Both tiers of the Regional TAZs are consistent with Census 2009 Topographically Integrated Geographic Encoding and Referencing (TIGER)/Line Tract boundaries. Regional TAZs are either entire census tracts or are wholly contained within a census tract. When the tract boundary splits parcels with developable land use, parcel boundaries are accepted.
>
> Consistency with 2020 TIGER/Line Block Group or Sub-regional TAZ Boundaries
>
> To ensure the consistency, our TAZ boundary is maintained the same as the SCAG 2008 Model development excluding Orange County Tier 2 TAZ. By suggestion from the OCTA, by the counts of Tier 2 TAZ ID, 10 zones were dissolved into their neighborhoods, and another 10 zones were

created. Therefore, total number of Tier 2 in Orange County stays same to the original version, but 10 TAZ IDs were removed, and 10 TAZ IDs were added.

Consistency between the Two Tiers of the Regional TAZ System – The Tier 2 zones of the Regional Model's TAZ system are consistent with the Tier 1 zones. Tier 2 zones consist either of an entire Tier 1 zone or are wholly contained within a Tier 1 zone.

Consistency with 2020 TIGER/Line Block Boundaries –To ease data collection and creation, zonal boundaries generally do not cross Census 2020 Blocks (updated boundary in 2009). Some exceptions occur where Census Blocks consist of multi-part polygons or splits properties (developed parcels).

Complement the Transportation System – A critical step in developing the TAZ system is defining the level of roadway facilities for which accurate forecasts are desired. To ensure an accurate distribution and traffic assignments, existing and future freeways and principal arterials are generally represented as regional TAZ boundaries, consistent with other zonal creation criteria.

Homogeneous Land Use – Land use maps and general plan maps were used to identify existing and future land use. Ideally, it is best to limit the number of different land uses contained within a zone. However, given the geographic size of the regional TAZs and the mixed-use development patterns within the urban area, creating zones with uniform land uses was often difficult.

Similar Population/Employment Size – Zones were developed to represent similar levels of future development (population and employment). This parameter was not strictly enforced given the sparse development of some areas, the intensity of nonresidential land uses within urban areas, and consideration for special generators (example - universities and airports).

Other Considerations – Natural and man-made boundaries are also considered in the definition of the zone system. Political jurisdictions, railroad lines, rivers, mountain ranges and other topographical barriers were considered in developing the two tiers of regional TAZs.

Procedures

Tier 2 zones originated from the 2009 TIGER/Line block group and sub-regional TAZ boundary files. 2019 regional parcel boundary was aggregated into 107,562 SPZs, considering the detailed transportation network, land use and natural terrains. Then SPZs were aggregated into TAZs according to the principles above.

Figure 1-4: Transportation Analysis Zone System (Tier 1)