

Date of Hearing: June 2, 2020

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Lorena Gonzalez, Chair

AB 2731 (Gloria) – As Amended May 6, 2020

Policy Committee: Natural Resources

Vote: 9 - 0

Urgency: No

State Mandated Local Program: No

Reimbursable: No

SUMMARY:

This bill establishes special procedures under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) for concurrent preparation of the administrative record, public hearings and mediation for a multimodal regional transportation facility project, including a central mobility hub, to serve as a connection to link regional transit to the San Diego International Airport.

FISCAL EFFECT:

Negligible, if any, additional state costs.

COMMENTS:

- 1) **Purpose.** The San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG), in partnership with the City of San Diego, the Port of San Diego and the San Diego County Regional Airport Authority, has made it a chief priority to identify a solution for a direct transit connection to the airport. Optimally positioned near the airport, the Old Town Center (OTC) presents an opportunity to provide a solution to the region's longstanding challenge of airport connectivity and is one of several sites being considered for development of a Central Mobility Hub.

According to the author, "AB 2731 will establish important public processes for SANDAG to undertake should the Central Mobility Hub project move forward."

- 2) **Background.** CEQA provides a process for evaluating the environmental effects of applicable projects approved or undertaken by public agencies. For projects that are not exempt from CEQA, an initial study is prepared to determine if the projects may have a significant impact on the environment. If the initial study shows no significant impact, a negative declaration is issued. If the project may significantly impact the environment, a full Environmental Impact Report (EIR) must be prepared, including the identification of environmental impacts and required mitigation, compliance and reporting measures intended to reduce the environmental impacts to the extent feasible. CEQA also provides for public process and legal challenges.

CEQA includes various statutory exemptions, as well as categorical exemptions in the CEQA Guidelines.

Additionally, if a project is not exempt from CEQA, but the initial study shows it would not result in a significant effect on the environment, the lead agency must prepare a negative declaration and no EIR is required.

- 3) **Objectives of Bill Could Be Achieved Under Current Law.** SB 122, Chapter 476, Statutes of 2016, provides procedures for record preparation substantially similar to this bill. One difference is that this bill does not require the applicant to pay the lead agency's costs. SANDAG explains that these provisions are not applicable to SANDAG's project because SANDAG is the project proponent and will prepare the record at its own cost.
- 4) **Legislative Findings.** This bill includes extensive findings from the prior version of the bill. The committee may wish to delete the findings which are no longer relevant.

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