

Big Changes on Horizon for Traffic Impact Analysis Under CEQA

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It's funny how things work out in the end. At the outset of the 2013–2014 legislative session, California lawmakers responded to years of complaints about CEQA and calls for legislative reform by introducing numerous bills containing various "reform" efforts. Most of those bills, however, did not even make it out of their Legislative houses of origin.

Only one significant CEQA bill made it to the Governor's desk and was signed into law in 2013: SB 743 (Steinberg, 2013). The political will to secure a new NBA basketball arena for the Sacramento Kings provided the impetus that secured SB 743's passage. Not surprisingly, then, the early focus since SB 743's passage has been on the law's CEQA-streamlining provisions and special procedures aimed at expediting construction of the Kings' new arena.

But SB 743 planted another less discussed CEQA-reform seed regarding traffic impacts that is about to germinate in the form of proposed new CEQA Guidelines section 15064.3. The new guideline provisions aim to drastically change how traffic impacts are analyzed and mitigated across California. The first two sections of this article explain how we got to this point and briefly summarize what is being proposed. The final section discusses the potential wide-ranging ramifications of the proposed new CEQA Guidelines.

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