

## *Chapter 8*

# *Alternatives to the Proposed Project*

### ***8.1 Introduction***

Section 15126 (a) of the CEQA Guidelines states the primary intent of the alternatives evaluation in an EIR, as follows:

“(a) Alternatives to the Proposed Project. An EIR shall describe a range of reasonable alternatives to the project, or to the location of the project, which would feasibly attain most of the basic objectives of the project but would avoid or substantially lessen any of the significant effects of the project, and evaluate the comparative merits of the alternatives. An EIR need not consider every conceivable alternative to a project. Rather it must consider a reasonable range of potentially feasible alternatives that will foster informed decision making and public participation. An EIR is not required to consider alternatives which are infeasible. The lead agency is responsible for selecting a range of project alternatives for examination and must publicly disclose its reasoning for selecting those alternatives. There is no ironclad rule governing the nature or scope of the alternatives to be discussed other than the rule of reason.”

The Guidelines also state that “the discussion of alternatives shall focus on alternatives capable of eliminating any significant adverse environmental effects or reducing them to a level of insignificance, even if these alternatives would impede to some degree the attainment of the project objectives, or would be more costly.

### ***8.2 Project Impacts Deemed Potentially Significant:***

The main body of this EIR, Section 3, contains an evaluation of the environmental impacts associated with implementation of the CSU Stanislaus Physical Master Plan Update. In this chapter, the comparative merits of project alternatives are discussed and, where appropriate, evaluated and compared with the impacts of the implementation of the proposed CSU Stanislaus Physical Master Plan Update.

As a result of the environmental analysis contained in Chapter 3 of this document, it has been found that there are no “significant” physical impacts expected to result from the implementation of the CSU Stanislaus Physical Master Plan Update. There are, however, five environmental areas where impacts could be deemed “significant” without mitigation. These areas are, Aesthetics, Air Quality, Biological Resources, Noise and Transportation & Traffic impacts.

***Aesthetics:*** Potential adverse physical impacts to Aesthetics, as a result of implementation of the CSU Stanislaus Physical Master Plan Update are limited to the impacts resulting from the construction of new multi-story buildings near the periphery of the Campus site and the installation of new lighting facilities on the northeast corner of the Campus for sports facilities.

***Air Quality:*** Development activities associated with implementation of CSU Stanislaus Physical Master Plan Update are expected to result in an increased campus population. Consequently, additional vehicle trip generation and resultant mobile source emissions of air pollutants, and a higher level of energy consumption on the campus will occur.

***Biological Resources:*** The “urbanization” process creates both threats and opportunities for wildlife. Species that adapt to the human environment flourish in an urban setting. Others, which tend to rely a natural setting for food and shelter, will be diminished in population. The Campus, due to its park like setting provides a habitat for a variety of “urban dwelling” wildlife.

***Noise:*** As implementation of the CSU Stanislaus Physical Master Plan Update occurs, additional sources of noise may be generated from additional motor vehicle traffic on the local streets and highway network. New construction of noise sensitive uses near historic sources of noise, such as streets and highways, will create new potential conflicts and incompatibilities with some types of land uses. Construction activities will result in the creation of short-term increases in the ambient noise level of the campus and may have some off-campus impacts. Implementation of the Turlock General Plan Noise Element establishes standards that will reduce or eliminate this potential with new “off-campus” development.

***Transportation and Traffic Impacts:*** Transportation related environmental impacts associated with the updated CSU Stanislaus Physical Master Plan Update based on information developed in preceding sections. Appendix “G” of the CEQA Guidelines address these topical issues:

- Traffic Load, Capacity and Level of Service
- Adequate Parking
- Effects on Alternative Transportation
- Transportation Safety
- Emergency Access
- Air Traffic Patterns

To the extent that updating the Physical Master Plan may result in future development within the campus and the City of Turlock, an increase in automobile traffic may result in the need to expand, extend and improve transportation facilities and services.

It should be noted that three of the five potentially significant impacts that could result from the implementation of the CSU Stanislaus Master Plan Update are related to increased traffic generation. Increase trips, resulting from the buildout of planned

Campus facilities and student capacity, will result in an increase in traffic noise and automotive emissions will be added to the area’s cumulative air pollution.

### ***8.3 Project Objectives:***

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As stated in Chapter 2 (section 2.4, the purpose of the CSU Stanislaus Physical Master Plan Update is to revise and update the previous Master Plan. A major purpose of the revision is to take into consideration the changes in conditions and circumstances that have occurred since the Plan was last updated. Furthermore, the update is intended to express policies in a manner and format that will simplify their interpretation, administration, and application to individual development decisions. The update also assures that the University’s Physical Master Plan Update reflects the aspirations of the stakeholders in the process, including the University’s Board of Trustees, faculty and staff, students, and residents in the community.

The broad purpose of the CSU Stanislaus Physical Master Plan Update is to meet the requirement that each CSU campus develop a Physical Master Plan which shows existing and anticipated facilities necessary to accommodate a specified enrollment at an estimated target date, in accordance with approved educational policies and objectives. The Plan reflects the ultimate physical requirements of academic programs and auxiliary activities.

Consistent with the mission of the State University system, the major objectives of the updated Campus Master Plan include:

- Share in the need to accommodate the demand for higher education by students in California by providing the necessary facilities and improvements.
- Improve, update, and replace outdated, inefficient and obsolete facilities.
- Provide high quality services that enhance access and usability.
- Maintain and enhance campus open space, character, and the quality of the physical environment.

The Program EIR analysis indicates that the implementation of the CSU Stanislaus Physical Master Plan Update will not result in significant and unavoidable impacts. With regards to project-specific impacts, such as light & glair, cumulative air quality impacts, traffic, noise, biological resources, etc., mitigation is proposed to reduce these impacts to a level deemed to be less than “significant”. All other impacts analyzed in this EIR were found to be either less than significant or would have no impact. Thus, the following analysis focuses on identifying alternatives that can reduce or avoid the identified potentially significant but mitigatable impacts.

### ***8.4 Project Alternatives:***

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Consistent with the objectives of the proposed CSU Stanislaus Physical Master Plan Update, several project alternatives appear feasible in light of the requirements of State law. Each alternative is examined specific to the identified “significant impact” of Aesthetics, Air Quality, Biological Resources, Noise and Transportation & Traffic.

### *8.5 Evaluation of Alternatives:*

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#### **Alternative Considered but Rejected from Further Analysis**

The following alternative was considered but rejected from further analysis.

##### ***Alternative 1: Alternate Location***

To reduce impacts at the CSU Stanislaus campus, an alternative could be devised whereby an alternate locations or additional satellite campuses (similar to the CSU Stanislaus Stockton Campus) are developed instead to accommodate the projected gradual growth in student enrollment to 12,000 full-time equivalent (FTE) students. Such an alternative would require substantial resources to construct and operate a new campus or satellite campus to accommodate planned FTE student enrollment of the existing Master Plan. Presently, a suitable large site that is appropriate for such a new campus or satellite campus is readily available in the surrounding area. Limited class offerings and duplication of resources would be required for an additional satellite facility to provide the necessary levels of service, while the University's existing main campus can accommodate these additional students with relatively limited resource outlays. In addition, depending on the specific location, an alternative campus might not serve students from nearby areas as well as the existing campus which is well-served by local transit and easily accessible from the existing roadways.

Most importantly, an alternative location would likely generate greater and additional environmental impacts than those associated with the updated CSU Stanislaus Physical Master Plan Update. Pursuant to this alternative, all of the project's environmental effects would basically relocate to another location and additional impacts are more than likely going to be created.

Construction emissions and noise, traffic and traffic noise, lighting effects and other effects associated with the construction and operation of a University campus for the buildout FTE student enrollment would be the same at another location as at the existing campus. If the alternate location were to be located within another area of the City of Turlock, infrastructure, services, access and related facilities would most likely have to be developed to accommodate the new campus site. If the alternate location were to be in the periphery or at the outskirts of the City, environmental effects could increase substantially with respect to Agricultural land losses, possible impacts on wildlife, etc.

Therefore, depending on a specific location, the alternative site option would most likely be environmentally inferior to the project or at best, environmentally comparable to the project.

In addition, this alternative would not be cost-effective as it would require large fiscal outlays, including the purchase cost of a new site, cost of constructing duplicative facilities, cost of constructing utility and other infrastructure improvements; cost associated with additional parking, cost of operating and maintaining the facilities and others. Therefore, the alternate location alternative is not considered further.

### **Alternatives Considered**

The following alternatives to the updated Campus Master Plan are considered:

Alternative 2: “No Project” alternative required by CEQA; Alternative 3: Smaller Facility Development  
Alternative 4: Development with More Student Housing on Campus.

#### ***Alternative 2: No Project – Continuation of Current Campus Master Plan***

The “No Project” alternative, required to be evaluated in the EIR, considers “existing conditions as well as what would be reasonably expected to occur in the foreseeable future if the project were not approved, based on current plans and consistent with available infrastructure and community services” [CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.6(e)(2)]. Pursuant to this alternative, the current Campus Master Plan would continue to be implemented.

***Campus Development:*** Pursuant to this alternative, development according to the current Master Plan would continue, and planned student enrollment at the campus would remain unchanged at approximately 12,000 FTE students. New buildings constructed pursuant to this alternative would not include Parking Structures, development of some campus facilities or implementation of some energy conservation strategies.

***Environmental Effects:*** This alternative would not eliminate new vehicle trips associated with the growth in student enrollment, and the related exhaust emissions and vehicular noise. Nor would it alter the potential for the development of light and glare or reduce the potential impacts to nesting raptors.

This alternative would not reduce construction-related noise and air quality impacts, although peak day impacts would be expected to remain potentially significant. Under this alternative, no increase in demand for police or fire protection services would occur. Attention to the aesthetics of new buildings would ensure that appropriate design treatments are incorporated.

If the current Master Plan is not updated, some additional facilities and improvements would still be needed to provide an adequate level of support and academic facilities for the academic and other programs, including classroom space meeting current code requirements and on-campus or off-campus housing. Accordingly, the current Physical Master Plan would likely be updated in the future anyway to provide for replacement and rehabilitation of the existing campus buildings, as well as some new facilities similar to those proposed. As a result, it is likely that in the long term, the environmental effects of this alternative could be similar to those of the updated Master Plan.

***Relation to Master Plan Objectives:*** The CSU Stanislaus Physical Master Plan Update continues the goals and objectives of the 1968 Master Plan. The Updated Plan, however, includes some new policies and programs addressing conservation and related issues that address concerns over air and water resources and Global Climate Change.

***Alternative 3: Decreased Student Enrollment to 8,000 FTES***

CSU Stanislaus is one of the larger urban campuses in the CSU system, area wise, encompassing approximately 228 acres in total site area. A smaller share of the State-wide growth in student enrollment could be considered as an alternative by locking in the present FTES enrollment of approximately 7,042.

***Campus Development:*** Pursuant to this alternative, Campus growth would be capped at the present FTE or approximately 8,000 FTE and future growth would not be allowed beyond this number. New facilities would only be needed to accommodate modernizing existing buildings and facilities or building new facilities to incorporate modern technology and/or curriculum offerings.

***Environmental Effects:*** This alternative would contain the growth of new traffic on area roadways and thus reduce impacts on Traffic and Circulation, Noise and Air Quality at this campus site. Therefore, if no student enrollment growth is accommodated at the CSU Stanislaus campus, those 4,958 FTE students projected to seek enrollment at CSU Stanislaus campus would have to be accommodated at other universities elsewhere in Central California. As a result, this alternative would relocate the environmental effects associated with accommodating those students elsewhere, including vehicular trips and the associated traffic impacts, exhaust emissions and the resultant air quality impacts, demand for fire and police protection services, water and other public utilities, and others. Overall, these indirect effects of accommodating the students at other locations together with accommodating fewer students at the CSU Stanislaus campus would likely result in either similar or possibly greater overall environmental impacts than those associated with the proposed update to the Physical Campus Master Plan.

***Relation to Master Plan Objectives:*** This alternative, would contribute to the goal of preserving open space and the “park like” setting of the campus, but would limit the ability of the Campus to meet its share of statewide student growth as mandated by the state legislature. In compliance with the State Legislative mandate expressed in the State Master Plan for Education, the CSU system is obligated to continue to accommodate all fully eligible graduates from California high schools and community college transfer students.

***Alternative 4: Less Student Housing on Campus***

The updated Campus Master Plan provides for more than 3,000 beds in student housing facilities on campus. At present the campus has a total of 656 beds.

***Campus Development:*** Pursuant to this alternative, no new student units would be developed on the CSU Stanislaus Campus site.

***Environmental Effects:***

With less student housing, more students would need to commute to campus resulting in more peak hour trips and potentially greater traffic and related impacts. Emissions of criteria pollutants on a per-trip-basis would increase due to longer trips required to commute to campus from offsite locations. Without new dormitories, additional parking

would need to be provided on campus that could result in construction of more parking structures, which could affect the open space and pedestrian character of the campus. Peak day construction air quality and noise impacts would be significant, as with the Master Plan.

This alternative would increase new vehicle trips associated with the growth in student enrollment, and the related exhaust emissions and vehicular noise. Nor would it alter the potential for the development of light and glare or reduce the potential impacts to nesting raptors. This alternative would reduce some construction-related noise and air quality impacts, although peak day impacts would be expected to remain potentially the same for the construction of other campus facilities.

***Relation to Master Plan Objectives:*** Under a “Reduced Student Housing” alternative, would require an amendment to the 1968 Master Plan objective of providing 3,000 beds to meet on-campus housing demand. The City of Turlock and the private sector would need to develop plans to accommodate CSU Stanislaus student housing needs. Although this alternative might maintain the campus open space and character, it is not likely to achieve the major project objective to share in the need to accommodate the student housing needs of the Campus.

***Alternative 5: Alternative Facility Site Plan***

This alternative considers the provision of a different layout for location of future facilities and improvements on campus.

***Campus Development:*** An alternative Master Plan layout could possibly reduce some impact but would not accomplish the campus Master Plan goal with respect to location of buildings and facilities around the “central core” and encourage pedestrian flows around the campus site. During the planning phase of the project, all feasible alternative approaches were studied from the perspective of consistency with the overall campus goals and objectives.

***Environmental Effects:*** This alternative would not reduce traffic generation of future traffic growth to a potentially less than significant impact to traffic volumes and related impacts to traffic noise and air pollution from automobiles. There could be some reduction to the loss of trees but placement of lights would not be altered.

***Relation to Master Plan Objectives:*** Under an “Alternative Facility Site Plan” alternative, planned building replacement projects may not be carried forward in a logical and efficient manner, with respect to all campus needs and design priorities.

Although this alternative might improve the campus open space and character, it is not likely to achieve other major project objectives with respect to access, parking and operational efficiency.

***8.6 Environmentally Superior Alternative:***

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Among the alternatives considered, none of the alternatives discussed is considered clearly environmentally superior to the project. Each alternative results in potential impacts, with a several of the potential impacts greater or lesser than those associated with updated Physical Master Plan. Overall, when both direct and indirect impacts of each alternative are considered together, the alternatives are either environmentally comparable or inferior to the proposed project. None of the alternatives would meet the objectives of the CSU Stanislaus' Plan or further the goals and objectives of the State University System Master Plan to the degree of the project proposal.