

Section 5.5 **Government Structure Options**

5.5 GOVERNMENT STRUCTURE OPTIONS

Government Structure Options consider the advantages and disadvantages of various government structures that could provide public services. LAFCO is not required to enact changes in government structure as part of an MSR, although proposals may be initiated concurrently or subsequently. LAFCO is required to consider the advantages and disadvantages of any options that might be available to provide the services. In reviewing potential government structure options, consideration may be given to financial feasibility, service delivery quality and cost, regulatory or government frameworks, operational practicality, and public reference.

5.5.1 Overview – Existing Organization and Procedure

As previously noted in this MSR, the City of Chico provides services and infrastructure within its current incorporated boundaries and also within portions of Butte County's adjacent unincorporated areas, which includes the SOI. Both jurisdictions are autonomous and not subject to the others regulations, although the agencies do work together to coordinate on issues when possible (see Section 5.4, Opportunities for Shared Facilities). Both jurisdictions use similar public participation and hearing requirements in the planning and development process, including many that are dictated by State planning law.

The City of Chico is responsible for governance within its incorporated boundaries. The City is governed by a charter and operates under a Council-Manager form of government. An election held each November in even numbered years chooses either three or four council members. The Council selects a mayor and vice mayor from among its members to serve two-year terms. The City Council appoints a City Manager to implement its policies and directives and a City Attorney to serve as its legal counsel. The City Council is responsible for setting policy in the City. Actions of the Council, including opportunities for public involvement and public hearing, are regulated in accordance with applicable statutes and City procedures.

The City has numerous Commissions and Boards that act upon or provide recommendations to the City Council on a variety of issues. These include the Planning Commission, Architectural Review Board, Arts Commission, Bidwell Park and Playground Commission, Chief Advisory Board, Development Review Committee, Economic Development Committee*, Finance Committee*, Human Resource Commission, Internal Affairs Committee*, Parking Place Commission, and Solid Waste Committee*. All members are appointed to four-year terms by the City Council. (Commissions marked by an asterisk (*) are Council committees with two-year terms).

■ City of Chico

Services are structured to meet the needs and expectations of urban/suburban levels of development. Should urban level development occur within the Planning Area, it would be dependent upon the extension of infrastructure and provision of services from the City of Chico. The levels of service that would be provided to the extended areas would, in most cases, enhance the services currently available. The respective services and the ability for Chico to serve areas outside of the City's incorporated boundaries are presented in Section 4, Infrastructure Needs and Deficiencies, of this MSR.

■ Butte County

Butte County provides a number of services to County residents, which includes land within the City of Chico Planning Area. The levels of services provided are structured towards the rural nature of development in the County and reflect the sheer amount of geographic area that must be covered. The County generally promotes urban level development within incorporated areas rather than unincorporated areas.

5.5.2 Practices and Performance

As a municipality, the City of Chico is structured to meet the needs and expectations of urban/suburban levels of development. As a single service provider with established service systems, the City would be able to efficiently provide a comprehensive range of services. With existing and planned development within the SOI, the extension of infrastructure and services into these SOI areas would be logical and generally more efficient than if provided by other utilities. Provision of infrastructure and services by the City into the SOI should not overlap or conflict with other service providers. The inclusion of the SOI areas in the City is not anticipated to have a significant affect on the governmental structure of the City of Chico or Butte County.

Public participation in the planning and development process would be similar whether development in the SOI occurred within the City of Chico or Butte County. Both jurisdictions would require a planning process that would include public input and public hearings. Many elements of the process are required by California planning law.

Determination 5.5-1

The City of Chico provides services and infrastructure within its current incorporated boundaries and also within Butte County's unincorporated areas, which includes the SOI. The expansion of urban development within the City of Chico Planning Area would be dependent upon the extension of infrastructure and provision of services from the City of Chico. The levels of service that would be provided to the extended areas would, in most cases, enhance the services currently available.

Determination 5.5-2

As a municipality, the City of Chico is structured to meet the needs and expectations of urban/suburban levels of development. The inclusion of the SOI areas in the City is not anticipated to have a significant effect on the governmental structure of the City of Chico or Butte County.

Determination 5.5-3

Mechanisms are in place in the City and in Butte County government that effectively provides for public participation in the planning and development process, regardless of whether development in the SOI occurs within the City of Chico or Butte County.

5.5.3 Plans and Regulatory Requirements**■ City of Chico General Plan Policies**

The City of Chico General Plan includes numerous policies that address growth and the provision of services and infrastructure. Many of these policies are noted in other sections of this MSR. No policies are noted that directly address government structure options.

5.5.4 Potential Structure Options/Limitations**■ Consolidated Transit Services**

The Butte Regional Transit (B-Line) system began service on July 5, 2005. The B-Line is the consolidation of CATS in Chico; OATS in Oroville; BCT in Butte County; and paratransit services in Chico, Oroville, and Paradise. B-Line runs fixed routes locally in Chico, Oroville, and Paradise and between communities throughout Butte County. The restructuring of the regional transit system benefits Chico and Butte County communities with streamlined regional routes, improvement of local routes, fast and convenient connections, easier transfers, simplified fares, and expanded service to new locations in Oroville and Paradise.⁶² There has been no change to Chico local routes even though Chico CATS routes are now part of the B-Line system. The main changes with service to the City of Chico involve regional routes (formerly BCT). Regional B-Line routes traveling into the City are scheduled to run more direct to the downtown Chico Transit Center than before with improved timed connections to local Chico routes.

■ Cooperation of Recreation and Park Services

The City Park Department and the Chico Area Recreation and Park District (CARD) provide parks, park maintenance, recreational programming, and related facilities and services in the City of Chico's jurisdiction. Since its formation in 1948, CARD has provided parks services to 255 square miles of lands located within the City of Chico (10 percent of the total CARD land area), as well as the unincorporated community of Nord and surrounding rural lands in northwestern Butte County.⁶³ The City Park Department is responsible for Bidwell Park and approximately 20 smaller park facilities throughout the City.⁶⁴

The City of Chico generally does not enter into joint-use agreements with other organizations; however, the City and CARD do have informal park and recreational agreements and coordinate to provide parks

62 Butte County Association of Governments website, <http://www.bcag.org>, accessed November 29, 2005.

63 Butte County LAFCO, *Municipal Services Review Recreation and Park Services, Final Report* September 1, 2005, p. 3.1-1.

64 Butte County LAFCO, *Municipal Services Review Recreation and Park Services, Final Report* September 1, 2005, p. 3.2-1.

and recreation services.⁶⁵ Generally, CARD administers most of the fee-based recreational programming, as the City has fewer options for fee-based services.⁶⁶ Chico has historically been uninterested in owning and maintaining parks and recreational facilities beyond Bidwell Park, but recently the City Park Department has been developing parks, especially in new growth areas, often in coordination with CARD, which is tasked with ongoing maintenance of the parkland and any recreational programming.⁶⁷ Cooperation between the City and CARD continues with exploration of cost reduction opportunities for shared park facilities and programs.

5.5.5 Summary of Written Determinations

- 5.5-1 *The City of Chico provides services and infrastructure within its current incorporated boundaries and also within Butte County's unincorporated areas, which includes the SOI. The expansion of urban development within the City of Chico Planning Area would be dependent upon the extension of infrastructure and provision of services from the City of Chico. The levels of service that would be provided to the extended areas would, in most cases, enhance the services currently available.*
- 5.5-2 *As a municipality, the City of Chico is structured to meet the needs and expectations of urban/suburban levels of development. The inclusion of the SOI areas in the City is not anticipated to have a significant effect on the governmental structure of the City of Chico or Butte County.*
- 5.5-3 *Mechanisms are in place in the City and in Butte County government that effectively provides for public participation in the planning and development process, regardless of whether development in the SOI occurs within the City of Chico or Butte County.*

65 Butte County LAFCO, *Municipal Services Review Recreation and Park Services, Final Report* September 1, 2005, p. 3.2-15.

66 Butte County LAFCO, *Municipal Services Review Recreation and Park Services, Final Report* September 1, 2005, p. 3.2-11.

67 Butte County LAFCO, *Municipal Services Review Recreation and Park Services, Final Report* September 1, 2005, p. 3.2-17.