

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

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Governor's Office of Planning & Research

February 10, 2021

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STATE CLEARINGHOUSE

Ms. Jocelyn Swain, Senior Planner
City of Lancaster
44933 Fern Avenue
Lancaster, CA 93534

RE: Lancaster Health District Master Plan
Vic. LA-14/PM R66.755,
SCH # 2017051076
Ref. GTS # LA-2019-02403AL-NOP
GTS # LA-2017-03459AL-DEIR

Dear Ms. Swain:

Thank you for including the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) in the environmental review process for the above referenced project. The proposed project is a Mixed-use development including medical and general offices, retail and commercial uses, housing, and hotel/conference space. The Master Plan would allow for the development of 1,600 residential units; 259,200 sf of hotel uses (180 rooms) and a 70,000 sf conference center; 740,000 sf of commercial/office space; 480,000 sf of continuum of care facilities; 791,000 sf of acute care facilities including replacing the existing hospital with a new 700,000 sf facility (380 beds) and 12,000 sf plant facility; 249,800 sf of sub-acute care facilities and a 385,000 sf parking car garage with 1,100 parking spaces.

As a reminder, please consider integrating transportation and land use in a way that reduces VMT and Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions by facilitating the provision of more proximate goods and services to shorten trip lengths and achieve a high level of non-motorized travel and transit use.

Caltrans seeks to promote safe, accessible multimodal transportation. Methods to reduce pedestrian and bicyclist exposure to vehicles improves safety by lessening the time that the user is in the likely path of a motor vehicle. Caltrans recommends the project consider the use of methods such as, but not limited to, the construction of physically separated facilities such as sidewalks, raised medians, refuge islands, and off-road paths and trails, or a reduction in crossing distances through roadway narrowing.

Additionally, pedestrian and bicyclist warning signage, flashing beacons, crosswalks, signage and striping can be used to indicate to motorists that they should expect to see

and yield to pedestrians and bicyclists. Visual indication from signage can be reinforced by road design features such as lane widths, landscaping, street furniture, and other design elements.

Transit Access

AVTA (Antelope Valley Transit Authority) provides local bus service to the project area with Routes 1, 7, 11, and 12. In the vicinity of the project site, local bus stops are located along Avenue J near 20th Street West, 17th Street West, 15th Street West and Kingtree Avenue, as well as along 15th Street West near Avenue J, Avenue J-3, Avenue J-5, Avenue J-8, Meadow View Lane, and the High Desert Plaza shopping center. AVTA also provides weekday commuter bus service to downtown Los Angeles, Century City/West Los Angeles, and the San Fernando Valley, departing from Lancaster City Park, approximately 1.25 miles southeast of the project site. Furthermore, Metrolink provides rail service from the Antelope Valley to Santa Clarita, the San Fernando Valley and Los Angeles basin cities, with the Antelope Valley Line providing 9 weekday departures and arrivals, and 6 weekend departures and arrivals. The Metrolink Station is located at Lancaster Boulevard and Sierra Highway, approximately 1 mile northeast of the project site.

The proposed buildout Master Plan would not substantially change or eliminate bus facilities or transit routes, nor would it conflict with a policy or program related to transit access. The proposed Development Code is intended to enable a public realm that functions well for all users, including transit riders. The proposed Master Plan envisions a potential AVTA hub within the project site at the southeastern corner of Avenue J and 20th Street West. This hub could bring AVTA routes to stops closer into the project site, making arrival by bus from Palmdale and other parts of Lancaster more feasible for employees, visitors, and residents. Consistent with General Plan goals, policies, and actions, the proposed Master Plan would encourage the use of public transportation through its proposed mixed-use, transit-oriented development, particularly near or along major arterial roadways. Further, the Proposed Project's streetscape improvements would heighten walkability of the project site and expand available bicycle infrastructure, encouraging transfer to and from transit options for those traveling through or near the project site. As such, additional transit amenities would serve to enhance the MMLOS across area roadways in accordance with performance criteria considered in the City's Master Plan of Complete Streets. Therefore, the Proposed Project would not conflict with any standard related to public transit facilities or services.

Multi-Modal Circulation

The City encourages pedestrian and non-motorized transportation by making provisions for sidewalks, bike lanes, and trails within roadway designs and rights-of-way. Alternative transportation corridors enhance and provide a range of mobility options for residents and visitors. Visitors, residents, and employees of the project site would have a range of transportation mode options. Pedestrian- and bicycle-friendly streets and intersections, a finer-grained public realm network, and a walkable building pattern would promote alternative modes of transportation in order to travel around and within

the project site. The City encourages developments to consider pedestrian safety and accommodate safe routes which are clearly marked and striped. In most cases, they should be designed as one-way routes to flow in the same direction as the adjacent automobile traffic.

The Proposed Project would encourage the use of active and sustainable modes of transportation such as biking and walking through a combination of streetscape design, land use and building orientation, and connectivity. The proposed Master Plan seeks to enable development of a well-connected medical campus with a District Core consisting of a true urban center, organized by a complete, interconnected network of comfortable, safe, attractive streets, paseos, passages, and public and semi-public spaces that provide comfortable walking and biking access throughout the project site.

Bicycle Access

The City's Master Plan of Trails and Bikeways proposes Class II bike lanes along Avenue J on the northern border of the project site and along 17th Street West through the project site between Avenue J and Avenue J-8. Further, Class II bike lanes are proposed along the length of 15th Street West through the site. In addition, a Class I (separated) bike lane is proposed along the length of Amargosa Creek.

Pursuant to the Master Plan of Trails of Bikeways, the Proposed Project would implement a range of bicycle improvements within and bordering the project site. Class II or buffered bike lanes would be incorporated on Avenue J between 15th Street West and 25th Street West, resulting in a reduction in vehicular travel lanes from six to four. Existing Class II bike lanes along Avenue J-8 would be widened from 5 feet to 6 feet between 15th Street West and 25th Street West. For north-south routes, Class II bike lanes are proposed along 18th Street West between Avenue J and Avenue J-8 and 7-foot-wide buffered bike lanes would be added to 15th Street West between Avenue J and Avenue J-8, consistent with City plans. Lastly, a future Class I bike path is proposed within the Master Plan to follow Amargosa Creek.

The City's vision is to create a connected network of on-road and off-road trails and bikeway facilities to accommodate users of all ages and abilities. When implemented, this network would provide linkages between residential areas, commercial centers, transportation hubs, employment centers, and recreational activities. As proposed, the Master Plan would expand and improve bicycle facilities across the Project Area

Pedestrian Access

The Master Plan of Trails and Bikeways identifies a number of proposed pedestrian paths and jogging paths in the vicinity of the project area, including within the project site. A jogging trail is proposed along Avenue J and a joint pedestrian/Class II bike route along Amargosa Creek.

A central component of the proposed Master Plan is creating an urban district of walkable scale, with activated street frontages and enhanced streetscapes that encourage pedestrian activity. The proposed Master Plan also provides design standards for Avenue J that emphasize streetscape and landscape improvements, including the construction of a full 5-foot-wide minimum sidewalk, street trees, a landscaped median, lane narrowing, and enhanced buffered Class II Bike Lanes. A future pedestrian/Class I bike path is envisioned to follow Amargosa Creek. Lastly, the Project Plan would enable complete streets improvements to 15th Street West, including 7-foot-wide minimum sidewalks, street trees and native landscaping, buffered Class II bike lanes, the construction of a landscaped median, and addition of parallel on-street parking in support of street fronting businesses and/or residences. As such, additional pedestrian amenities would serve to enhance the MMLOS across area roadways in accordance with performance criteria considered in the City's Master Plan of Complete Streets.

VMT

For the Project VMT per Service Population, the Proposed Project would generate 34.0 Total VMT per service population in the base year (2020) and 28.7 Total VMT per service population under future year conditions (2040). In comparison to the Antelope Valley Planning Area Baseline VMT of 41.8, the Proposed Project generated VMT for both existing and future years is more than 15% below the Antelope Valley Planning Area Baseline VMT. There is no VMT calculation nor justification in the Technical Memorandum, dated May 21, 2020, by Fehr & Peers. The VMT model assumptions, input, output, and/or internal capture rate for each land use to obtain total VMT should be included in the VMT analysis.

Traffic Safety

We acknowledged that the City of Lancaster is currently working on projects to enhance five (5) interchanges along State Route 138/State Route 14 - Avenue G, Avenue J (20th St West), Avenue K, Avenue L, and Avenue M. Each interchange is being evaluated to determine how to improve access, repair roads and ramps, improve directional signage and enhance the streetscape at these key entries and exit points of the City. These projects are funded by Measure R funds.

Currently, the Initial Study and Mitigated Negative Declaration for Avenue K Interchange Project and Avenue J Interchange Project are completed. Caltrans is carrying out a safety review using Caltrans' December 2020 Updated Interim LD-IGR Safety Review Guidance and will contact the lead agency if any safety concerns are identified.

For this master plan, transportation of heavy construction equipment and/or materials, which requires the use of oversized-transport vehicles on State highways, will require a transportation permit from Caltrans. It is recommended that large size construction/operation truck trips be limited to off-peak commute periods and idle time not to exceed 10 minutes.

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Page 5 of 5

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Mr. Alan Lin the project coordinator at (213) 269-1124 and refer to GTS # LA-2017-03459AL-DEIR.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Miya Edmonson".

MIYA EDMONSON
IGR/CEQA Branch Chief

email: State Clearinghouse