

California Department of Transportation

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July 29, 2024

City of Fresno
South Central Specific Plan
Draft Environmental Impact Report Notice of Availability
SCH #2019079022
GTS #: <https://ld-igr-gts.dot.ca.gov/district/6/report/33065>

SENT VIA EMAIL

Mx. Sophia Pagoulatos, Planning Manager
City of Fresno
2600 Fresno St
Fresno, CA 93721
Sophia.pagoulatos@fresno.gov

Dear Mx. Pagoulatos:

Thank you for the opportunity to review the South-Central Specific Plan (SCSP) Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR) Caltrans has completed the review of the proposed Plan. This DEIR evaluates the environmental impacts of the proposed SCSP. A key impetus for the proposed SCSP is to improve Fresno's economic competitiveness and support employment opportunities for residents.

The SCSP area (Plan Area), encompasses 5,567 acres located just south and southeast of Downtown Fresno. The Plan Area is generally located south of California Avenue, north of American Avenue, and between Fig and Peach Avenues. The area has a range of property types including residential, religious, educational, public, warehouse, and industrial.

The mission of Caltrans is to provide a safe and reliable transportation network that serves all people and respects the environment. The Local Development Review (LDR) process reviews land use plans and plans through the lenses of our mission and state planning priorities of infill, conservation, and travel-efficient development. To ensure a safe and efficient transportation system, we encourage early consultation and coordination with local jurisdictions and project proponents on all development projects that utilize the multimodal transportation network.

Caltrans provides the following comments consistent with the State's smart mobility goals that support a vibrant economy and sustainable communities:

1. We concur with the City of Fresno's General Plan's Mobility and Transportation Element, which outlines objectives and policies aimed at achieving goals for the local transportation and circulation system (City of Fresno, 2014). Additionally, we recognize that the policies from the Mobility and Transportation Element are relevant to the proposed SCSP. Specifically, this pertains to Policies MT-1-a through MT-1-J, MT2-1-a through MT-2-M, MT-4-b through MT-4-h, MT-5-a through MT-5-f, MT-6-a through MT-6-m, and MT-8-b through MT-8-c. It is recommended that the city consider a multimodal transportation system (such as bicycle and pedestrian facilities as well as public transportation) to provide connectivity of modes between the residential uses and commercial/retail uses to reduce VMT impacts from the SCSP.
2. We commend the City of Fresno for their proposed SCSP Policies and Development Standards T-1 through T-13, as described on page 4.15-13.0 of the SCSP Draft EIR. These policies and standards aim to establish and enforce truck routes, expand bus services, assist school districts in implementing the 'Safe Route to School' program, conduct traffic calming studies, implement traffic safety measures, and consider funding mechanisms to pre-fund infrastructure improvements prior to development. Additionally, they focus on improving and maintaining sidewalks, which we also support.
3. It is our understanding that the City of Fresno is considering the development of a regional Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) bank or VMT exchange program for the Southeast Development Area Specific Plan. We recommend that similar VMT mitigation strategies be explored for the SCSP.
4. Impact 4.15-3: *Substantially Increase Hazards Individual projects must conform to all City design standards and other requirements*, as stated beginning on page 4.15-16 of the SCSP Draft EIR, due to a Geometric Design Feature or Incompatible Uses. The Traffic Planning Section of the City's Traffic Operations and Planning Division will also be reviewing these projects. In addition, Caltrans should be included in the approval process for projects that are located within two miles of a State facility.
5. Alternative transportation policies should be applied to the SCSP. An assessment of multi-modal facilities should be conducted to develop an integrated multi-modal transportation system to serve and help alleviate traffic congestion caused by the project and related development in this area of the city. The assessment should include the following:
 - a. Pedestrian walkways should link this Project to transit facilities, bicycle pathways and other walkways in the surrounding area.
 - b. Coordinating connections to local and regional bicycle pathways should be done to encourage further the use of bicycles for commuter and recreational purposes.
 - c. Transit service and bus stop accommodations should be extended to within ¼-mile of the SCSP site.
6. Check that Active Transportation Plans and Smart Growth efforts support the state's

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2050 Climate goals. Caltrans supports reducing VMT and GHG emissions in ways that increase the likelihood people will use and benefit from a multimodal transportation network.

If you have any other questions, please call or email: Keyomi Jones, Transportation Planner at (559) 981-7284 or keyomi.jones@dot.ca.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'D. Padilla', written in a cursive style.

Mr. Dave Padilla, Branch Chief,
Office of System and Regional Planning
Transportation Planning – North Branch

Cc: State Clearinghouse