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Governor's Office of Planning & Research

**Jan 14 2021**



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**STATE CLEARINGHOUSE**

January 14, 2021

Ms. Rachel Kwok, Environmental Planner  
City Planning Division  
City of Santa Monica  
1685 Main Street, Main Stop 28  
Santa Monica, CA 90401

RE: 1633 26<sup>th</sup> Street Office Project  
Vic. LA-10 PM R3.34  
SCH # 2020050142  
Ref. GTS # LA-2020-03287AL-NOP  
GTS # LA-2020-03433AL-DEIR

Dear Ms. Kwok:

Thank you for including the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) in the environmental review process for the above referenced project. The project would consist of the refurbishment of the project site's existing three story, 45,529 square feet (sf) office building, and replacement of the existing 58,940 sf surface parking lot with two new four-story, creative and/or business professional office buildings. The proposed new buildings (Buildings A and B) would comprise a total of 129,265 sf of new floor area building (Building C) rising to a maximum height of 54 feet. Together, the three buildings would total approximately 174,684 sf and would form a campus-like area leaving open space in the middle as a courtyard. The approximately 10,436 sf courtyard would feature a large mature specimen tree that would be a focal point of the open space. The project would also include a three level subterranean garage with 399 parking spaces with access provided from Pennsylvania Avenue.

The mission of Caltrans is to provide a safe, sustainable, integrated and efficient transportation system to enhance California's economy and livability. Senate Bill 743 (2013) has been codified into CEQA law. It mandates that CEQA review of transportation impacts of proposed developments be modified by using Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) as the primary metric in identifying transportation impacts. As a reminder, Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) is the standard transportation analysis metric in CEQA for land use projects after the July 1, 2020 statewide implementation date. You may reference The Governor's Office of Planning and Research (OPR) website for more information.

<http://opr.ca.gov/ceqa/updates/guidelines/>

This development should incorporate multi-modal and complete streets transportation elements that will actively promote alternatives to car use and better manage existing parking assets. Prioritizing and allocating space to efficient modes of travel such as bicycling and public transit can allow streets to transport more people in a fixed amount of right-of-way.

Caltrans supports the implementation of complete streets and pedestrian safety measures such as road diets and other traffic calming measures. Please note the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) recognizes the road diet treatment as a proven safety countermeasure, and the cost of a road diet can be significantly reduced if implemented in tandem with routine street resurfacing.

Also, Caltrans has published the VMT-focused Transportation Impact Study Guide (TISG), dated May 20, 2020 and Caltrans Interim Land Development and Intergovernmental Review (LD-IGR) Safety Review Practitioners Guidance, prepared in July 2020.

<https://dot.ca.gov/programs/transportation-planning/office-of-smart-mobility-climate-change/sb-743>

Overall, a future environmental report should include a Transportation Impact Study (TIS) to ensure all modes are well served by planning and development activities. This includes reducing single occupancy vehicle trips, ensuring safety, reducing vehicle miles traveled, supporting accessibility, and reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

The City's Big Blue Bus and the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (Metro) provide a dense network of public transit service throughout the study area. The project site is directly accessible via transit links between most areas of the City and much of the metropolitan area including Downtown Los Angeles, University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA)/West Los Angeles, Century City, Los Angeles International Airport (LAX), Venice, and Culver City.

The City of Santa Monica is one of the most bikeable community in the Southern California region. The City has a dense and growing network of bicycle facilities including some immediately adjacent to the Project site. The following streets near the project site have marked bicycle lanes separating bicyclists from vehicles:

- 26th Street between Olympic Boulevard and Broadway
- Stewart Street (northbound only) between Pico Boulevard and Colorado Avenue
- Yale Street between Colorado Avenue and Montana Avenue
- Broadway from Ocean Avenue to past Centinela Avenue
- Nebraska Avenue from Stewart Street to past Centinela Avenue

Following the alignment of the E Line, the Expo Line Bike Path is located near the project site and is a dedicated bike path, entirely separating bicyclists and other non-motorized users from vehicles on the street. In addition to these facilities, the City designated some streets as Bicycle Routes or Slow Streets allowing for bicyclists to share the same space. Bicycle Routes are marked with “sharrow” markings, and Slow Streets are designed for slow travel and shared, safe usage for all users. Around the project site, Chelsea Avenue between Broadway and Washington Avenue has a Bicycle Route. Slow Streets around the project site include Princeton Street, Harvard Street, and Pennsylvania Avenue.

Sidewalks are generally present on all streets throughout Santa Monica. Generally, sidewalks throughout Santa Monica between 5 and 15 feet wide depending on the street and block. Olympic Boulevard east of 26th Street lacks sidewalks on the north side of the street. Santa Monica also recently updated man traffic signals in the study area to include a “leading pedestrian interval” (LPI), which holds all vehicle movements (red signal) for several seconds at the start of a pedestrian phase to improve safety by giving pedestrians a head start and improve their visibility to motorists.

Signalized intersections throughout the study area have marked or textured crosswalks and pedestrian countdown signals. Signalized pedestrian walk signals are either automatic at the intersection or actuated by pedestrians by push-button. Recently, as a result of the COVID19 pandemic, the City has temporarily placed all pedestrian walk signals in the City as automatic pedestrian recall mode. All intersections have accessible curb ramps. Caltrans recommends City of Santa Monica to consider pedestrian and bicyclist warning signage, flashing beacons, crosswalks, signage and use striping to indicate to motorists that they should expect to see and yield to pedestrians and bicyclists, etc.

The project would increase office uses on an underutilized site within 0.15 mile to the 26th/Bergamot Metro Line E Light Rail Station and less than two blocks from existing bus stops. Two bike hubs are within two blocks of the project site, including a hub on 26th Street at Pennsylvania Avenue and another hub at 26th/Olympic Metro Line E Light Rail Station. To encourage bicycle transit, the project would include ample bicycle parking, shower, and locker facilities. While the project would not change the sidewalks along the 26th Street frontage, it would include the planting of street trees along 26th Street and Pennsylvania Avenue. Along Pennsylvania Avenue, the project would include landscape setback from the street providing seating opportunities for the restaurant/noncommercial space in Building B as well as for pedestrians using the lunch time food trucks. Such space would continue to provide and enhance pedestrians use of food trucks which assists in discouraging use of vehicles to travel for lunch. The project would also be within walking distance of a wide variety of residential, retail, and restaurant use. The project would implement a Transportation Demand Management (TDM) plan in accordance with the City’s TDM Ordinance.

Ms. Rachel Kwok, Environmental Planner

January 14, 2021

Page 4 of 4

The project would include a TDM plan to encourage the use of carpooling, bike commuting, and use of public transportation, including Metro's E Line light rail transit. The TDM plan would include a parking cash out for leased spaces, commuter matching services, transportation allowance, secure bicycling parking and valet service, and other incentives to increase multi-modal transportation and reduce trips to the site.

Since the project's VMT calculations would not exceed VMT Significance Threshold 1 and Significance Threshold 2, the proposed project would have a less-than-significant impact on CEQA Guidelines section 15064.3, subdivision (b).

For this project as a reminder, 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.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Mr. Alan Lin the project coordinator at (213) 897-8391 and refer to GTS # LA-2020-03433AL-DEIR.

Sincerely,



MIYA EDMONSON  
IGR/CEQA Branch Chief

email: State Clearinghouse