

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

DISTRICT 4

OFFICE OF TRANSIT AND COMMUNITY PLANNING

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Nina Bellucci, Planner
Sonoma County
2550 Ventura Avenue
Santa Rosa, CA 945403

Rezone Sites for Housing Project – Notice of Preparation (NOP)

Dear Nina Bellucci:

Thank you for including the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) in the review process for the Rezone Sites for Housing Project. We are committed to ensuring that impacts to the State's multimodal transportation system and to our natural environment are identified and mitigated to support a safe, sustainable, integrated and efficient transportation system. The following comments are based on our review of the March 2020 NOP.

Project Understanding

The project proposes site identification, environmental analysis, and rezoning of urban sites for by-right medium density housing. This project will add sites to the Sonoma County's (County) Housing Element site inventory to comply with the new inventory requirements and will implement current General Plan Policies and Programs, including Policy HE-2f to consider a variety of sites for higher-density and affordable housing and Housing Element Programs 11 and 20, which encourages the identification of urban sites near jobs and transit that may appropriately accommodate additional housing. The project includes: 1) a General Plan Map amendment as necessary to adjust allowable densities on identified sites; 2) rezoning of sites to match new general plan densities or to add the AH (Affordable Housing) or WH (Workforce Housing) combining zones; and 3) a program Environmental Impact Report (EIR) to evaluate the potential environmental impacts of the project. The project is intended to facilitate and encourage by-right housing development. US-101 and State Routes (SR)-12 and 116 are in the vicinity of some of the proposed project sites.

Travel Demand Analysis

Please note that a travel demand analysis that provides a Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) analysis for projects proposed within this site's boundaries may be required as part of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) process. With the enactment of Senate Bill (SB) 743, Caltrans is focusing on transportation infrastructure that supports smart growth and efficient development to ensure alignment with State policies using efficient development patterns, innovative travel demand reduction strategies, multimodal improvements, and VMT as the primary transportation impact metric. The travel demand analysis should include:

- A vicinity map, regional location map, and site plan clearly showing project access in relation to the State Transportation Network (STN). Ingress and egress for all project components should be clearly identified. Clearly identify the State right-of-way (ROW). Project driveways, local roads and intersections, car/bike parking, and transit facilities should be mapped.
- A VMT analysis pursuant to the County's guidelines or, if the County has no guidelines, the Office of Planning and Research's Guidelines. Projects that result in automobile VMT per capita above the threshold of significance for existing (i.e. baseline) city-wide or regional values for similar land use types may indicate a significant impact. If necessary, mitigation for increasing VMT should be identified. Mitigation should support the use of transit and active transportation modes. Potential mitigation measures that include the requirements of other agencies such as Caltrans are fully enforceable through permit conditions, agreements, or other legally-binding instruments under the control of the City.
- A schematic illustration of walking, biking and auto conditions at the project site and study area roadways. Potential safety issues for all road users should be identified and fully mitigated.
- The project's primary and secondary effects on pedestrians, bicycles, travelers with disabilities and transit performance should be evaluated, including countermeasures and trade-offs resulting from mitigating VMT increases. Access to pedestrians, bicycle, and transit facilities must be maintained.

Vehicle Trip Reduction

Given the place, type and size of the project, projects within this site's boundaries should include a robust Transportation Demand Management (TDM) Program to reduce VMT and greenhouse gas emissions. Such measures are critical to facilitating efficient site access. The measures listed below can promote smart mobility and reduce regional VMT.

- Project design to encourage walking, bicycling and transit access;
- Unbundled parking;
- Secured bicycle storage facilities;
- Fix-it bicycle repair station(s);
- Bicycle route mapping resources;
- Aggressive trip reduction targets with Lead Agency monitoring and enforcement.

Transportation Demand Management programs should be documented with annual monitoring reports by a TDM coordinator to demonstrate effectiveness. If the project does not achieve the VMT reduction goals, the reports should also include next steps to take in order to achieve those targets. Also, reducing parking supply can encourage active forms of transportation, reduce regional VMT, and lessen future transportation impacts on State facilities.

For additional TDM options, please refer to the Federal Highway Administration's *Integrating Demand Management into the Transportation Planning Process: A Desk Reference* (Chapter 8). The reference is available online at: <http://www.ops.fhwa.dot.gov/publications/fhwahop12035/fhwahop12035.pdf>.

Transportation Impact Fees

We encourage a sufficient allocation of fair share contributions toward multimodal and regional transit improvements to fully mitigate cumulative impacts to regional transportation. We also strongly support measures to increase sustainable mode shares, thereby reducing VMT. Caltrans welcomes the opportunity to work with the City and local partners to secure the funding for needed mitigation. Traffic mitigation or cooperative agreements are examples of such measures.

Lead Agency

As the Lead Agency for potential projects within this site's boundaries, the City of Santa Rosa is responsible for all project mitigation, including any needed improvements to the STN. The project's fair share contribution, financing, scheduling, implementation responsibilities and lead agency monitoring should

be fully discussed for all proposed mitigation measures.

Encroachment Permit

Please be advised that any permanent work or temporary traffic control that encroaches onto the ROW requires a Caltrans-issued encroachment permit. If any Caltrans facilities are impacted by the project, those facilities must meet American Disabilities Act (ADA) Standards after project completion. As part of the encroachment permit submittal process, you may be asked by the Office of Encroachment Permits to submit a completed encroachment permit application, six (6) sets of plans clearly delineating the State ROW, six (6) copies of signed, dated and stamped (include stamp expiration date) traffic control plans, this comment letter, your response to the comment letter, and where applicable, the following items: new or amended Maintenance Agreement (MA), approved Design Standard Decision Document (DSDD), approved encroachment exception request, and/or airspace lease agreement.

Thank you again for including Caltrans in the environmental review process. Should you have any questions regarding this letter, please contact Andrew Chan at 510-622-5433 or andrew.chan@dot.ca.gov.

Sincerely,



Mark Leong
District Branch Chief
Local Development - Intergovernmental Review

CC: State Clearinghouse