

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

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Governor's Office of Planning & Research

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STATE CLEARINGHOUSE

October 29, 2020

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Reema Mahamood
City of San Jose
200 East Santa Clara Street, T-3
San Jose, CA 95113

Blossom Hill Station Mix-Use Project – Notice of Preparation (NOP) of an Environmental Impact Report (EIR)

Dear Reema Mahamood:

Thank you for including the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) in the environmental review process for the Blossom Hill Station Mix-use 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 September 2020 NOP.

Project Understanding

The project proposes to construct a 6-story mixed-use building with approximately 22,595 square feet (s.f.) of commercial space and up to 239 market rate multi-family residential units and a 6-story multi-family residential building with 89 affordable units, reconfiguration of the parking lot and removal of 52 ordinance-sized trees.

This 7.42-acre site is located at 605 Blossom Hill Road between Canoas Creek and the State Route (SR)-85 off-ramp in city of San Jose. It is located within the Priority Development Area identified in the Plan Bay Area 2040 and within the Transit Priority Areas defined in the California Public Resources Code, Section 21099.

Travel Demand Analysis

With the enactment of Senate Bill (SB) 743, Caltrans is focused on maximizing efficient development patterns, innovative travel demand reduction strategies, and multimodal improvements. For more information on how Caltrans assesses Transportation Impact Studies, please review Caltrans' [Transportation Impact Study Guide](#). The detailed Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) analysis should include the following:

- A VMT analysis pursuant to the City'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.
- Clarification of the intensity of events/receptions to be held at the location and how the associated travel demand and VMT will be mitigated.

Highway Operations

The project applicant shall perform queuing analysis for the ramp terminal intersections listed below. Vehicle queues due to the project added traffic shall be accommodated within the ramps and freeway traffic shall not be impacted. If the project generated traffic impacts ramp operations, the impact shall be mitigated, or a fair share contribution shall be allocated for the mitigation. The project applicant shall coordinate with the City of San Jose and Caltrans for proposed mitigation(s), if there are any impacts due to the project.

- Blossom Hill Road East Eastbound (EB) to SR-85 Southbound (SB)/Northbound (NB) on-ramps; and
- SR-85 SB/NB off-ramps to Blossom Hill Road

Multimodal Planning

Caltrans recommends that the bike lanes and intersection crossings on Blossom Hill Road be improved as part of the project, especially along this block and at the nearby freeway off-ramp. Suggested improvements may include green striping, protected bicycle crossing, left-turn bike boxes, and right-turn bike pockets. Caltrans recommends installing pedestrian improvements at the off-ramp crossing, such as Americans with Disability Act (ADA) ramps and high visibility crossing. To help ease the access to/from the light rail station and the new bus stop, a clearly marked and well-established bike/pedestrian pathway is also recommended between the Blossom Hill Road, the new bus stop and the light rail station.

The lead agency may also consider upgrading the current 4-foot bike lane to at least 5 feet, given that the current travel lane with 15-foot width could allow for a 5-foot bike lane, a 1-foot buffer, and an 11-foot bus parking location to prevent the bus from blocking the bicyclists' travel way while still maintain a 12-foot vehicle way.

In addition, please consider installing wayfinding measures at both the bus stops and the Light Rail entrance tunnel to direct passengers to and from the bus and light rail system via the tree-lined sidewalk, which would help better reserve the Emergency Vehicle Access Easement (EVAE) for emergency vehicles when needed.

Traffic Safety

A single ADA curb ramp design may not be appropriate for this location. Please consider using the two-ramp design as shown in Caltrans Standard Plan A88A – Detail A – Typical Two-Ramp Corner Installation. The design can be viewed at http://ppmoe.dot.ca.gov/hq/esc/oe/project_plans/highway_plans/stdplans_US-customary-units_18/viewable_pdf/a88a.pdf.

The exposed end of the concrete curb and sidewalk could be a tripping hazard, therefore please consider installing Asphalt Concrete (AC) Dike Type E from the end of the new concrete curb to the existing AC Dike Type E and backfill behind the new AC Dike.

Also, please explain how pedestrian traffic would be handled during the curb ramp and sidewalk construction and show the pedestrian detour plans in the Draft EIR.

If temporary construction easement would be needed to construct the curb, please consult Julie McDaniel, the District Office Chief from Caltrans Right-of-Way (ROW) Department, via julie.mcdaniel@dot.ca.gov.

Landscape Architecture

Please include Caltrans ROW lines in the site plans and provide tree protection of any existing trees within Caltrans ROW if needed.

Lead Agency

As the Lead Agency, the City of San Jose is responsible for all project mitigation, including any needed improvements to the State Transportation Network (STN). The project's fair share contribution, financing, scheduling, implementation responsibilities and lead agency monitoring should be fully discussed for all proposed mitigation measures.

Construction-Related Impacts & Encroachment Permit

Please be advised that any permanent work or temporary traffic control that encroaches onto the ROW requires a Caltrans-issued encroachment permit. The IS/MND indicates that a temporary encroachment onto the State ROW would be expected during construction on SR-85. Note that potential impacts to the State ROW from project-related temporary access points should be analyzed. Project work that requires movement of oversized or excessive load vehicles on state roadways requires a transportation permit issued by Caltrans. Prior to construction, coordination may be required with Caltrans to develop a Transportation Management Plan (TMP) to reduce construction traffic impacts to SR-85. For more information, and to apply, visit: <https://dot.ca.gov/programs/traffic-operations/transportation-permits>.

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 package, digital set of plans clearly delineating the State ROW, digital copy 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. Your application package may be emailed to

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D4Permits@dot.ca.gov.

To download the permit application and to obtain more information on all required documentation, visit <https://dot.ca.gov/programs/traffic-operations/ep/applications>.

Thank you again for including Caltrans in the environmental review process. Should you have any questions regarding this letter, please contact Yunsheng Luo at Yunsheng.Luo@dot.ca.gov. Additionally, for future notifications and requests for review of new projects, please email LDIGR-D4@dot.ca.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mark Leong". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Mark Leong
District Branch Chief
Local Development - Intergovernmental Review

cc: State Clearinghouse