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Governor's Office of Planning & Research

August 09 2021

STATE CLEARINGHOUSE

August 5, 2021

Sonya Lui, Principal Planner
City of Whittier Community Development Department,
13230 Penn Street, Whittier, CA 90602

RE: Whittier General Plan and Housing Element
Update 2021-2029 – Draft Environmental
Impact Report (DEIR)
SCH# 2021040762
GTS# 07-LA-2021-03652
Vic. LA Multiple

Dear Sonya Lui,

Thank you for including the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) in the environmental review process for the above referenced project. The City of Whittier is preparing a comprehensive update to its existing General Plan including the Housing Element. The Plan is intended to be an expression of the community's vision for the City and Planning Area and constitutes the policy and regulatory framework by which future development projects will be reviewed and public improvements will be implemented. The Plan includes all of the State-mandated elements, including Land Use and Community Character, Mobility and Infrastructure, Housing (2021-2029), Resource (combines Open Space, Habitat Conservation, Resource Conservation, Aesthetics, Recreation, and Park Services and Facilities), and Public Safety, Noise, and Health as well as an optional element addressing Historic Resources. The Draft General Plan includes a Land Use Map that identifies where land use designations are applied to parcels in the Planning Area.

After reviewing the DEIR, Caltrans has the following comments:

As stated in the Transportation Impact Analysis (TIA), this project will result in a significant VMT impact per service population. Caltrans concurs with the discussed Mitigation Measures, such as: Expanding local transit, building out the proposed bicycle and pedestrian facility network in the City's Bicycle Master Plan and General Plan, and encouraging telecommuting. Despite this. There was still a missed opportunity to study significantly reducing or eliminating car parking requirements, as recommended in Caltrans' NOP comment letter. Removing car parking is a proven method of both reducing trip demand and improving housing affordability.

- Research looking at the relationship between land-use, parking, and transportation indicates that car parking prioritizes driving above all other travel modes and undermines a community's ability to choose public transit and active modes of transportation. For any

community or city to better support all modes of transportation and reduce vehicle miles traveled, we recommend the implementation of Transportation Demand Management (TDM) measures as an alternative to requiring car parking.

- Additionally, rates of car ownership and vehicle miles traveled (VMT) are significantly lower for low-income households than they are for high-income households. Seeing as the Uptown Whittier Specific Plan previously established affordable housing as a primary goal, this should be taken into serious consideration. There is sufficient justification to reduce or eliminate car parking city-wide in order to promote affordability and achieve this project's goals.

Caltrans does not concur with the following vehicle capacity expansions, as they are in direct conflict with State goals and objectives:

1. Intersection #1: Norwalk Boulevard & Beverly Boulevard – The addition of a shared through/right-turn lane for both approaches results in an unnecessary increase in vehicle capacity and speed. It also removes the Class II bike lane on Beverly Boulevard one block east and west of Norwalk Boulevard. This is a non-beneficial modification.
2. Intersection #5: Pickering Avenue/Santa Fe Springs Road & Washington Boulevard & Whittier Boulevard – Unnecessary widening that induces vehicle trip demand and speed. This entire intersection should be redesigned for simplicity and to more safely accommodate all modes of travel. A single lane roundabout would be a much more appropriate intersection treatment for this location.
3. Intersection #8: Laurel Avenue & Lambert Road – Unnecessary widening that induces vehicle trip demand and speed. This also creates greater crossing distances for children attending Laurel Elementary School, exposing them to faster moving vehicles for greater distances and time. A dangerous modification to transportation infrastructure at this location.
4. Intersection #9: Colima Road & Mar Vista Street – The eastbound and westbound approach restriping, to provide two left-turn lanes and one shared through/right-turn lane, should only be considered if an equally safe bike lane configuration can be maintained. Caltrans would recommend upgrading the facility to a Class 4 Bikeway to ensure that the safety of road users isn't compromised by the lane reconfiguration.
5. Intersection #11: Colima Road & Lambert Road – The proposed widening of Lambert Road will induce additional VMT as well as decrease safety for all road users via increased vehicle speeds and increased crossing distances. The widening would make it more difficult for the communities on either side of Lambert Road to walk or bike to destinations at the intersection, including restaurants, a bicycle shop, and a Preschool. This would be in direct conflict with State goals to increase the number, and safety, of trips made via walking and biking

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Caltrans recommends that car parking requirements and vehicle capacity expansions both be eliminated and a reanalysis of VMT impacts conducted, with the goal of reducing the Project's VMT impact severity.

If you have any questions, please contact project coordinator Anthony Higgins, at anthony.higgins@dot.ca.gov and refer to GTS# 07-LA-2021-03652.

Sincerely,



Miya Edmonson
IGR/CEQA Branch Chief

cc: Scott Morgan, State Clearinghouse