

**DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION**

DISTRICT 4

OFFICE OF TRANSIT AND COMMUNITY PLANNING

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Governor's Office of Planning &amp; Research

**July 08 2021**Making Conservation  
a California Way of Life.**STATE CLEARINGHOUSE**

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Chip Griffin, Senior Planner  
Planning and Zoning Dept  
City of Walnut Creek  
P.O. Box 8039  
Walnut Creek, CA 94596

**Re: Walnut Creek Mixed Use Special District Project + Notice of Preparation (NOP)**

Dear Chip Griffin:

Thank you for including the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) in the environmental review process for the Walnut Creek Mixed Use Special District 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 June 2021 NOP.

**Project Understanding**

The Applicant proposes to amend the City of Walnut Creek's North Downtown Specific Plan (NDSP) to create a new Mixed-Use Special District that would allow for auto sales and service uses as well as a range of additional uses such as commercial office, hotel, and multi-family residential.

**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.

If the project meets the screening criteria established in the City of Walnut Creek's adopted Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) policy to be presumed to have a less-than-significant VMT impact and exempt from detailed VMT analysis, please provide justification to support the exempt status in alignment with VMT policy. Projects that do not meet the screening criteria should include a detailed VMT analysis in the DEIR, which should include the following:

- VMT analysis pursuant to the City 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.

### **Mitigation Strategies**

Location efficiency factors, including community design and regional accessibility, influence a project's impact on the environment. Using Caltrans' *Smart Mobility 2010: A Call to Action for the New Decade*, the proposed project site is identified as Close-In Compact Community where community design is moderate and regional accessibility is strong.

Given the place, type and size of the project, the DEIR should include a robust Transportation Demand Management (TDM) Program to reduce VMT and greenhouse gas emissions from future development in this area. The measures listed below have been quantified by California Air Pollution Control Officers Association (CAPCOA) and shown to have different efficiencies reducing regional VMT:

- Project design to encourage mode shift like walking, bicycling and transit access;
- Transit and trip planning resources such as a commute information kiosk;
- Real-time transit information systems;
- Transit access supporting infrastructure (including bus shelter improvements and sidewalk/ crosswalk safety facilities);
- New development vehicle parking reductions;
- VMT Banking and/or Exchange program;
- Incorporation of bicycle lanes in street design;
- Wayfinding and bicycle route mapping resources;
- Pedestrian network improvements;
- Traffic calming measures;
- Implementation of electric vehicle (EV) network, including designated parking spaces for EVs;
- Limiting parking supply;
- Market price public parking;
- Employee and public ridesharing programs, Commute Trip Reduction programs;
- Transit and trip planning resources such as a commute information kiosk;
- Real-time transit information system; or
- Transit access supporting infrastructure (including bus shelter improvements and sidewalk/ crosswalk safety facilities).

Using a combination of strategies appropriate to the project and the site can reduce VMT, along with related impacts on the environment and State facilities. TDM 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.

Please reach out to Caltrans for further information about TDM measures and a toolbox for implementing these measures in land use projects. Additionally, 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**

Please identify project-generated travel demand and estimate the costs of transit and active transportation improvements necessitated by the proposed project; viable funding sources such as development and/or transportation impact fees should also be identified. We encourage a sufficient allocation of fair share contributions toward multi-modal 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.

### **Lead Agency**

As the Lead Agency, the City of Walnut Creek 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.

Thank you again for including Caltrans in the environmental review process. Should you have any questions regarding this letter, please contact Laurel Sears at [laurel.sears@dot.ca.gov](mailto:laurel.sears@dot.ca.gov). Additionally, for future notifications and requests for review of new projects, please contact [LDIGR-D4@dot.ca.gov](mailto:LDIGR-D4@dot.ca.gov).

Sincerely,

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

MARK LEONG  
District Branch Chief  
Local Development - Intergovernmental Review

c: State Clearinghouse