

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

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Governor's Office of Planning & Research

June 29 2021

STATE CLEARINGHOUSE

June 29, 2021

Megan Taggart
City of Palmdale
38250 Sierra Highway
Palmdale, CA 93550

RE: City of Palmdale 2045 General Plan Update
– Notice of Preparation of an Environmental
Impact Report (NOP)
SCH # 2021060494
GTS # 07-LA-2021-03634
Vic. LA-138/PM: 44.445

Dear Megan Taggart:

Thank you for including the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) in the environmental review process for the above referenced NOP. The proposed project (Palmdale 2045) is a three-plus-year comprehensive update to the City's General Plan, the guiding document for the future of Palmdale over 25 years (2020-2045). The General Plan will focus on enhancing community identity, building on planned infrastructure investments, improving multi-modal active transportation and connectivity, integrating health and equity, and capitalizing on the City's unique location in the region. Palmdale 2045 identifies major strategies and physical improvements for the City over the next 25 years. These strategies include creating a vibrant downtown near the future multimodal transit station, establishing three health and wellness districts and two education districts, transforming Palmdale Boulevard into a mixed-use corridor, promoting a diversity of housing types in the City, forming village centers that offer a mix of residential choices and daily goods and services near existing neighborhoods, and building off existing industrial and aerospace business opportunities. The City of Palmdale is the Lead Agency under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).

Since the project covers the entire City, it is located near State Routes 14 and 138. After reviewing the NOP, Caltrans looks forward to reviewing this project's forthcoming Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) analysis. As a reminder, Senate Bill 743 (2013) mandates that VMT be used as the primary metric in identifying transportation impacts of all future projects under CEQA, starting July 1, 2020.

For information on determining transportation impacts in terms of VMT on the State Highway System, see the *Technical Advisory on Evaluating Transportation Impacts in CEQA* by the California Governor's Office of Planning and Research (OPR), dated December 2018: http://opr.ca.gov/docs/20190122-743_Technical_Advisory.pdf. The City can also refer to Caltrans' updated *Vehicle Miles Traveled-Focused Transportation Impact Study Guide* (TISG), dated May 2020 and released on Caltrans' website in July 2020: <https://dot.ca.gov/-/media/dot-media/programs/transportation-planning/documents/sb-743/2020-05-20-approved-vmt-focused-tisg-a11y.pdf>. Caltrans' new TISG is largely based on the OPR 2018 Technical Advisory.

Note that the updated TISG states, "Additional future guidance will include the basis for requesting

transportation impact analysis that is not based on VMT. This guidance will include a simplified safety analysis approach that reduces risks to all road users and that focuses on multi-modal conflict analysis as well as access management issues.” Since releasing the TISG, Caltrans has released interim safety analysis guidance, dated December 2020 and found here, for the City’s reference: <https://dot.ca.gov/-/media/dot-media/programs/transportation-planning/documents/sb-743/2020-12-22-updated-interim-ldigr-safety-review-guidance-a11y.pdf>. Caltrans encourages lead agencies to complete traffic safety impact analysis in the CEQA review process so that, through partnerships and collaboration, California can reach zero fatalities and serious injuries by 2050.

Caltrans also encourages lead agencies to promote alternative transportation, as the City of Palmdale will do by supporting local transit opportunities in the General Plan Update. This will increase accessibility and decrease Greenhouse Gas Emissions, which supports Caltrans’ mission to provide a safe and reliable transportation network that serves all people and respects the environment. For additional strategies to integrate into the General Plan Update that will promote equity and environmental preservation, please refer to:

- The 2010 *Quantifying Greenhouse Gas Mitigation Measures* report by the California Air Pollution Control Officers Association (CAPCOA), available at <http://www.capcoa.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/11/CAPCOA-Quantification-Report-9-14-Final.pdf>, or
- *Integrating Demand Management into the Transportation Planning Process: A Desk Reference* (Chapter 8) by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), available at <https://ops.fhwa.dot.gov/publications/fhwahop12035/index.htm>.

If you have any questions about these comments, please contact Emily Gibson, the project coordinator, at Emily.Gibson@dot.ca.gov, and refer to GTS # 07-LA-2021-03634.

Sincerely,

Emily Gibson

EMILY GIBSON
Acting IGR/CEQA Branch Chief

cc: Scott Morgan, State Clearinghouse