

California Department of Transportation

DISTRICT 4
OFFICE OF TRANSIT AND COMMUNITY PLANNING
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January 25, 2022



SCH #: 2021120442
GTS #: 04-SM-2021-00408
GTS ID: 25110
Co/Rt/Pm: SM/82/6.45

Lisa Porras, Planning Manager
City of San Carlos
600 Elm Street
San Carlos, CA 94070

Re: Environmental Impact Report for the City of San Carlos Focused General Plan Update: Housing, Land Use and Safety Elements and Accompanying Zoning Ordinance Amendments Notice of Preparation (NOP)

Dear Lisa Porras:

Thank you for including the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) in the environmental review process for the Environmental Impact Report for the City of San Carlos Focused General Plan Update: Housing, Land Use and Safety Elements and Accompanying Zoning Ordinance Amendments 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 December 2021 NOP.

Project Understanding

The project includes the preparation of the City of San Carlos General Plan Housing, Land Use and Safety Element Updates. The Land Use Element will be revised to ensure General Plan consistency, as required by State law. In addition, Zoning Amendments will also be made to implement new policies and land use intensities envisioned in the Housing Element Update to accommodate the provision of additional housing needs as part of San Carlos' Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA). The project encompasses the entire City and is located along segments of State Route (SR)-84 (El Camino Real), United States Route (US)-101, and Interstate (I)-280.

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'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 align with the City's VMT policy. Projects that do not meet the screening criteria should include a detailed VMT analysis in the Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR), which should include the following:

- 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 General Plan area roadways.
- The General Plan'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.

Additionally, Caltrans requests the City include transportation impact analyses with applicable mitigation for any additional or re-zoning of improvements adjacent to Caltrans' Right-of-Way (ROW).

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 a 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:

- Addition/ Increase in number of affordable housing units in project;
- Orientation of project towards non-auto corridor;
- Location of project near bicycle network;
- Incorporation of bicycle lanes in street design;
- Pedestrian network improvements;
- Traffic calming measures;
- Implementation of a neighborhood electric vehicle (EV) network, including designated parking spaces for EVs;
- Limiting parking supply;
- Unbundled parking from property costs;
- Implementation of Urban Non-Motorized Zone
- Market price public parking;
- Ridesharing programs, Commute Trip Reduction programs, bike sharing programs;
- Transit and trip planning resources such as a commute information kiosk;
- Real-time transit information system;
- Transit access supporting infrastructure (including bus shelter improvements and sidewalk/ crosswalk safety facilities);
- VMT Banking and/or Exchange program; and
- Bike parking near transit 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

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

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City and local partners to secure the funding for needed mitigation. Traffic mitigation- or cooperative agreements are examples of such measures.

Please identify in text and graphics existing and proposed improvements for the pedestrian, bicycle, and transit networks. The City should estimate the cost of needed improvements, expansion, and maintenance for the Plan area, as well as identify viable sources of funding, correlated with the pace of improvements, and a scheduled plan for implementation along with the DEIR.

Lead Agency

As the Lead Agency, the City of San Carlos 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.

Equitable Access

If any Caltrans facilities are impacted by the project, those facilities must meet American Disabilities Act (ADA) Standards after project completion. As well, the project must maintain bicycle and pedestrian access during construction. These access considerations support Caltrans' equity mission to provide a safe, sustainable, and equitable transportation network for all users.

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

Sincerely,



MARK LEONG

District Branch Chief

Local Development Review

c: State Clearinghouse