

5. Environmental Analysis

5.4 TRANSPORTATION

This section of the draft supplemental environmental impact report (DSEIR) evaluates the potential for implementation of the Del Norte High School Baseball and Softball Fields Lighting Project to result in transportation and traffic impacts in the City of San Diego and the unincorporated San Diego County. The transportation impact analysis in this section is prepared in part by Richard Garland, Principal Traffic Engineer from Garland & Associates.

5.4.1 Environmental Setting

5.4.1.1 REGULATORY BACKGROUND

State Regulations

Senate Bill 743

On September 27, 2013, Senate Bill (SB) 743 was signed into law, starting a process that fundamentally changed transportation impact analysis as part of CEQA compliance. The legislature found that with the adoption of the SB 375 (Sustainable Communities and Climate Protection Act), the state had signaled its commitment to encourage land use and transportation planning decisions and investments that reduce vehicle miles traveled (VMT) and thereby contribute to the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, as required by the California Global Warming Solutions Act of 2006 (Assembly Bill [AB] 32).

SB 743 eliminates auto delay, level of service, and other similar measures of vehicular capacity or traffic congestion as the sole basis for determining significant impacts under CEQA. Instead, other measurements, such as VMT, are to be utilized to measure impacts. Pursuant to SB 743, the Natural Resources Agency adopted revisions to the CEQA Guidelines to implement SB 743 on December 28, 2018, and established new criteria for determining the significance of transportation impacts.

The purpose of SB 743 is to balance the needs of congestion management, infill development, public health, greenhouse gas reductions, and other goals. The Office of Planning and Research released the “Technical Advisory on Evaluating Transportation Impacts in CEQA” in December 2018.

California Department of Transportation

Intersections within incorporated cities associated with freeway on- and off-ramps fall under California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) jurisdiction. Caltrans approves the planning, design, and construction of improvements for all state-controlled facilities. The proposed project would not impact any Caltrans facilities.

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Regional Regulations

San Diego Forward: The 2021 Regional Plan

The San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG) is a regional planning agency and Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) composed of 18 cities and the county government within the San Diego region. SANDAG must prepare a Regional Transportation Plan every four years that includes a Sustainable Communities Strategy consisting of land use, housing, and transportation strategies that, if implemented, would allow the region to meet its regional targets for greenhouse gas emissions reductions from passenger vehicle use established by the California Air Resources Board. The 2021 Regional Plan includes a blueprint for a regional transportation system to serve existing and projected residents and workers in the San Diego region, enhancing quality of life and offering more mobility options for people and goods. The 2012 Regional Plan also addresses the regional transportation challenges that are deeply connected to larger societal issues and impact everyone's quality of life, including economic and social inequities, climate change, public health, and safety.

Local Regulations

County of San Diego Transportation Study Guidelines

The County's adopted Transportation Study Guidelines (TSG) dated June 2020 has the following VMT screening criteria. However, the County is in the process of updating its TSG for VMT which establishes a VMT threshold using the regional average.

Screening Criteria for CEQA VMT Analysis

The requirements to prepare a detailed transportation VMT analysis apply to all land development projects except those that meet at least one of the following screening criteria. Such a project would have a less than significant VMT impact.

1. **Projects in a VMT-Efficient Area.** A VMT-efficient area is any area with an average VMT per resident, VMT per employee, or VMT per service population is 15 percent below the baseline average for the unincorporated county. Land use projects may qualify for the use of VMT-efficient area screening if the project can be reasonably expected to generate VMT per resident, per employee, or per service population that is similar to the existing land uses in the VMT efficient area.
2. **Small Residential and Employment Projects.** Projects generating less than 110 daily vehicle trips may be presumed to have a less than significant impact absent substantial evidence to the contrary. (Trips are based on the number of vehicle trips calculated using national ITE trip generation rates with any alternative modes/location-based adjustments applied.)
3. **Projects in a Transit Accessible Area.** Projects within a half mile of an existing major transit stop or an existing stop along a high-quality transit corridor may be presumed to have a less than significant impact absent substantial evidence to the contrary. Note that Sprinter stations are considered major transit stops. This presumption may not apply if the project:

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- Has a floor area ratio of less than 0.75.
 - Includes more parking for use by residents, customers, or employees of the project than required by the County.
 - Is inconsistent with SANDAG's most recent Sustainable Communities Strategy.
 - Replaces affordable residential units with a smaller number of moderate- or high-income residential units.
4. **Local-Serving Retail/Service Projects.** Local-serving retail/service projects of less than 50,000 square feet may be presumed to have a less than significant impact absent substantial evidence to the contrary. Local-serving retail/service generally improves the convenience of shopping close to home and has the effect of reducing vehicle travel.
5. **Local-Serving Public Facilities and Other Uses.** Public facilities that serve the surrounding community or public facilities that are passive use may be presumed to have a less than significant impact absent substantial evidence to the contrary. These do not include facilities or uses that would attract users from outside the vicinity of the use. The following are examples of local-serving facilities and uses:
- Transit centers
 - Schools
 - Libraries
 - Post offices
 - Park-and-ride lots
 - Local health/medical clinics
 - Law enforcement and fire facilities
 - Local parks and trailheads
 - Government offices
 - Communication and utility buildings
 - Water sanitation buildings
 - Waste management buildings
6. **Redevelopment Projects with Greater VMT Efficiency.** Where a project replaces existing VMT-generating land uses, the project may be presumed to have a less than significant impact if the total project VMT is less than the existing land use's total VMT, absent substantial evidence to the contrary.
7. **Affordable Housing.** An affordable housing project may be presumed to have a less than significant impact absent substantial evidence to the contrary if 100 percent of units are affordable.

City of San Diego

Transportation Study Manual: CEQA Transportation VMT Requirements

The City of San Diego provides the following screening criteria.

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1. Residential or Commercial Project in a VMT-Efficient Area
2. Industrial or Agricultural Project in a VMT-Efficient Area
3. Small Project generating less than 300 daily unadjusted driveway trips using the City of San Diego trip generation rates/procedures
4. Local-Serving Retail/Recreational Project
5. Local-Serving Public Facility
6. Affordable Housing
7. Mixed-Use Project Screening Considerations
8. Redevelopment Project Screening Considerations

Under both the City of San Diego and the County of San Diego, the proposed project is screened from further VMT analysis under the criteria of local-serving public facilities.

5.4.1.2 EXISTING CONDITIONS

Del Norte High School is bounded by Nighthawk Lane on the west, Del Sur Ridge Road and Lone Quail Road on the north, Deer Ridge Road on the east, and Camino San Bernardo on the south. The school campus is partially in the City of San Diego (west side of the campus) and partially in unincorporated San Diego County (east side). The baseball and softball fields that would be lighted are on the northwest corner of Camino San Bernardo and Deer Ridge Road. There are four fields at this location, but only two of the fields would be lighted, the varsity baseball and softball fields.

This section provides a brief description of the streets that run adjacent to the project site, the types of traffic control at each intersection, and the existing transit service in the area.

Existing Roadways

- **Deer Ridge Road** is a two-lane, north-south street that abuts the east side of the school campus and runs adjacent to the ballfields site. It has sidewalks on both sides of the street and no bike lanes. There is a gated driveway on Deer Ridge Road for maintenance and emergency access and a pedestrian access gate adjacent to the ballfields. The speed limit on Deer Ridge Road is 25 miles per hour.
- **Camino San Bernardo** is a two- to four-lane, east-west street that abuts the south side of the school campus and runs adjacent to the ballfields site. It has two lanes adjacent to the school site west of Deer Ridge Road and widens to four lanes east of Deer Ridge Road. There are bike lanes and sidewalks on both sides of the street adjacent to the school campus and east of Deer Ridge Road. West of Nighthawk Lane there are sidewalks on both sides of the street, but no bike lanes. The speed limit on Camino San Bernardo is 45 miles per hour.

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- **Nighthawk Lane** is a two-lane, north-south street that abuts the west side of the school campus. It has a bike lane and a sidewalk on both sides of the street. There are three school access driveways on Nighthawk Lane. One is the main access driveway to the school's parking lot, which forms the fourth leg of the signalized intersection of Nighthawk Lane and Potomac Ridge Road. The second is a minor access driveway at the south end of the parking lot that only accommodates right turns into and out of the parking lot because of a raised median on Nighthawk Lane. The third driveway is a gated maintenance and emergency access driveway adjacent to the school's football stadium. The speed limit on Nighthawk Lane is 25 miles per hour.
- **Del Sur Ridge Road** is a two-lane, east-west street that abuts the north side of the school campus. It has a bike lane and a sidewalk on both sides of the street. An exit-only driveway on Del Sur Ridge Road allows motorists to exit from the north end of the school's parking lot. It only accommodates right turns out of the parking lot because of a raised median at this location on Del Sur Ridge Road. The speed limit on Del Sur Ridge Road is 25 miles per hour.
- **Long Quail Road** is a two-lane street that runs along the northeast corner of the school campus. It has sidewalks on both sides of the street and no bike lanes. The speed limit on Lone Quail Road is 25 miles per hour.

The intersections that are adjacent to the school campus and the types of traffic control at each intersection are shown in Table 5.4-1, *Intersections Adjacent to Del Norte High School*.

Table 5.4-1 Intersections Adjacent to Del Norte High School

Intersection	Traffic Control	School Crosswalks (Yellow)
Nighthawk Lane at Camino San Bernardo	3-Way Stop Signs	Yes
Nighthawk Lane at Potomac Ridge Road/School's Main Driveway	Traffic Signal	Yes
Nighthawk Lane at Del Sur Ridge Road	Traffic Signal	Yes
Del Sur Ridge Road at Lone Quail Road	Traffic Signal	Yes
Lone Quail Road at Deer Ridge Road	4-Way Stop Signs	No
Deer Ridge Road at Fox Valley Way	Stop Sign on Fox Valley Way	No
Deer Ridge Road at Deer Ridge Place	Stop Sign on Deer Ridge Place	No
Deer Ridge Road at Camino San Bernardo	4-Way Stop Signs	Yes
Camino San Bernardo at Edgehill Road	Stop Sign on Edgehill Road	No

Public Transportation

The San Diego Metropolitan Transit System operates two bus lines in the general area, but neither is in the immediate vicinity of the school site. Route 20 runs along Camino del Norte, Bernardo Center Drive, and West Bernardo Drive, and Route 945 runs along West Bernardo Drive. However, these bus routes are

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approximately two miles east of Del Norte High School and do not offer a convenient public transportation option for patrons of the ballfields.

5.4.2 Thresholds of Significance

According to Appendix G of the CEQA Guidelines, a project would normally have a significant effect on the environment if the project would:

- T-1 Conflict with a program, plan, ordinance, or policy addressing the circulation system, including transit, roadway, bicycle, and pedestrian facilities.
- T-2 Conflict or be inconsistent with CEQA Guidelines § 15064.3, subdivision (b).
- T-3 Substantially increase hazards due to a geometric design feature (e.g., sharp curves or dangerous intersections) or incompatible uses (e.g., farm equipment).
- T-4 Result in inadequate emergency access.

5.4.3 Plans, Programs, and Policies

There are no plans, programs, or policies applicable to the proposed project.

5.4.4 Environmental Impacts

Summary of Impacts Identified in the Certified EIR

The Certified EIR was certified in 2006, before SB 743 was signed into law (September 27, 2013) and fundamentally changed transportation impact analysis for CEQA compliance. Pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15064.3, metrics related to VMT became effective beginning July 1, 2020. Therefore, the Certified EIR evaluated traffic impacts under the LOS metrics, not VMT. The Certified EIR determined that the approved project would result in an increase in traffic that was substantial compared to the existing traffic load and capacity of the street system, and it provided a mitigation measure to reduce LOS impacts to a less than significant level. The Certified EIR also found that the development and operation of a high school could result in an increased number of traffic conflicts and a corresponding increase in the probability of an accident occurring due to the increased number of pedestrian, bicycles, and the vehicular movements at the school driveways and the nearby intersections. However, this impact was less than significant with the incorporation of mitigation measures.

5.4.4.1 IMPACT ANALYSIS

The following impact analysis addresses the thresholds of significance; the applicable thresholds are identified in brackets after the impact statement.

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Impact 5.4-1: The proposed project would not conflict with a program, plan, ordinance, or policy addressing the circulation system, including transit, roadway, bicycle, and pedestrian facilities. [Threshold T-1]

Construction of the proposed project would entail large construction equipment, transportation of equipment to and from the construction sites, and worker vehicles. However, construction traffic would be temporary, and all construction activity and staging areas would be within the existing campus. Therefore, the proposed project would not obstruct traffic lanes or have any long-term effects on the circulation system.

At project completion, the proposed project would provide the opportunity for extended use of the ballfields into the evening hours by students and the general public, even with the later starting hours. Both ballfields are currently used by students from 2:00 pm to 6:30 pm for practices and games, with up to 35 participants (players and coaches) during practices and 60 participants and 80 spectators for games. These activities run from February to June, and there are typically two games per week and one game on any given day (see Chapter 3, *Project Description*, Table 3-1, *Activities Schedule*).

Little League/community use of the fields runs from August to December and typically involves 35 participants per field on weekdays and 35 participants and up to 50 spectators per field on weekend days. The Little League/community use of the fields only occurs when the school is not using them. There are typically three weekday games per week on each field and two weekend games per week.

The proposed project is not anticipated to change the number of practices and games at the fields but would extend the hours of use until 8:00 pm on weekdays from February to June and until 9:00 pm on weekdays from August to December. Weekend use of the ballfields would not change from the existing conditions except for special occasions pursuant to the District's facilities-use policy. The total number of participants and spectators on any given day is not anticipated to change.

Current access to the ballfields is through the campus, and the primary vehicular access to and from the school's parking lot is provided from Nighthawk Lane and Del Sur Ridge Road. In addition, there is a gated maintenance and emergency vehicle access driveway on Deer Ridge Road. Deer Ridge Road also has a pedestrian access gate, which would allow the public to park on Deer Ridge Road to access the ballfields. These vehicular and pedestrian access features would not change as a result of the project.

Because the field lighting project would not result in an overall increase in the number of practices or games at the ballfields but only shift the hours of use at the fields, the project would not result in an increase in the volumes of traffic generated by the fields. Table 5.4-2, *Anticipated Shift in Traffic Patterns at the Sports Fields*, shows the estimated traffic volumes by time of day for the existing conditions scenario and the "with proposed project" scenario.

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Table 5.4-2 Anticipated Shift in Traffic Patterns at the Sports Fields

Time of Year and Activity	Traffic Volumes	Time of Day Existing Conditions	Time of Day With Proposed Project
February to June Practice Days	35 arrivals	2:00 to 4:00 pm	3:00 to 5:00 pm
	35 departures	4:00 to 6:00 pm	6:00 to 8:00 pm
February to June Game Days	140 arrivals	3:00 to 4:00 pm	3:00 to 4:00 pm
	140 departures	5:00 to 6:00 pm	6:00 to 7:00 pm
August to December Weekday Little League/Community Use	70 arrivals	3:30 to 4:30 pm	5:00 to 6:00 pm
	70 departures	6:00 to 7:00 pm	8:00 to 9:00 pm
August to December Weekend Little League/Community Use	170 arrivals	8:30 am to 1:30 pm	8:30 am to 1:30 pm
	170 departures	12:00 to 5:00 pm	12:00 to 5:00 pm

The arrival and departure numbers shown in the “Traffic Volumes” column are based on the worst-case scenario, where each of the participants and spectators would travel in a single vehicle. It is highly likely that multiple participants and spectators would travel in most of the vehicles, which would reduce the traffic volumes shown in the table. Also, many of the student participants would already be at the school and would walk across campus to the fields, further reducing the number of arrivals shown in the table. The traffic volumes shown in the table, therefore, represent a conservative, worst-case scenario.

Table 5.4-2 shows that the primary impact of the field lighting project would be that the traffic patterns would shift to later times. For example, the 35 arrivals on practice days from February to June would shift by one hour—from 2:00 to 4:00 pm for existing conditions to 3:00 to 5:00 pm for the “with field lighting” scenario. The 35 departures would shift by two hours—from 4:00 to 6:00 pm for existing conditions to 6:00 to 8:00 pm for the “with field lighting” scenario. The most substantial impact would be from the weekday departures for the Little League/community use activities, which would shift from 6:00 to 7:00 pm for existing conditions to 8:00 to 9:00 pm for the “with field lighting” scenario. Many of the 70 departing vehicles during this time period would affect Deer Ridge Road and the other streets in the immediate vicinity of the school. So the primary transportation impact of the sports lighting project is that traffic would be added to the streets in the school vicinity between the hours of 7:00 and 9:00 pm.

Traffic counts taken on Deer Ridge Road in April 2022 found that there are 40 vehicles per hour between 7:00 and 8:00 pm and 18 vehicles per hour between 8:00 and 9:00 pm. The project would shift up to 35 vehicles between 7:00 and 8:00 pm from February and June and up to 70 vehicles between 8:00 and 9:00 pm from August to December. This shift would be adding new traffic to the existing traffic volumes, which are extremely low. However, it would not result in a significant impact because these traffic volumes are still low.

The proposed project would generate a demand for nonmotorized travel because some event patrons would travel to and from the ballfields as pedestrians or on bicycles. The streets adjacent to the school have sidewalks along both sides of the street, and the intersections adjacent to the school—Deer Ridge Road/Camino San Bernardo, Nighthawk Lane/Camino San Bernardo, Nighthawk Lane/Potomac Ridge Road, Nighthawk Lane/Del Sur Ridge Road, and Del Sur Ridge Road/Lone Quail Road—are equipped with painted crosswalks and traffic signals or all-way stop signs. The signalized intersections have pedestrian signals with push buttons, and bike lanes are provided on Camino San Bernardo, Nighthawk Lane, Potomac Ridge

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Road, and Del Sur Ridge Road. In addition, bike racks are available at the school. So there are multiple features at and near the ballfields that can accommodate bicycle and pedestrian travel.

In summary, the proposed project would not adversely affect traffic conditions on the study area street network or the performance of any transit or nonmotorized transportation facilities. The project would not conflict with a program, plan, ordinance, or policy addressing the circulation system, including transit, roadway, bicycle, and pedestrian facilities.

Level of Significance Before Mitigation: Less than significant impact.

Impact 5.4-2: The proposed project would not conflict or be inconsistent with CEQA Guidelines § 15064.3, subdivision (b). [Threshold T-2]

The District has not adopted guidelines and thresholds to evaluate transportation impacts and normally applies regulations adopted by the local agencies affected. For this project, the local agencies affected are the County of San Diego for unincorporated areas and the City of San Diego.

The proposed project also meets the project-type screening criteria based on the County's adopted TSG, which is currently being updated. The TSG states that public facilities that serve the surrounding community may be presumed to have a less than significant impact absent substantial evidence to the contrary. These do not include facilities or uses that would attract users from outside the vicinity of the use. Schools and local parks use are examples of local-serving facilities and uses. The City of San Diego's "Transportation Study Manual" dated September 29, 2020, also screens local-serving public facility from a detailed VMT analysis because they are considered to have a less than significant VMT impact. The proposed project would provide sports lighting to two of the four existing high school ballfields. The proposed project would serve the existing high school and community programs already happening on the high school campus, and would not increase site-generated traffic volumes. The project is presumed to result in a less than significant VMT impact, and no further VMT analysis is required. The proposed project would not conflict or be inconsistent with CEQA Guidelines § 15064.3, subdivision (b).

Level of Significance Before Mitigation: Less than significant impact.

Impact 5.4-3: The proposed project would not substantially increase hazards due to a geometric design feature (e.g., sharp curves or dangerous intersections) or incompatible uses (e.g., farm equipment). [Threshold T-3]

The proposed project would occur within the existing high school campus and would not modify the existing on- or off-site circulation systems. Public access to the sports fields would continue through the campus from the parking lot that is accessed via the existing driveways on Nighthawk Lane and Del Sur Ridge Road. No new land uses would be created that could potentially increase hazards or impact the design of the existing high school access. The streets, intersections, and driveways are designed to accommodate the anticipated levels of vehicular and pedestrian activity and have historically accommodated daily school and athletics-related traffic. The addition of field lights would be compatible with the design and operation of a high school. All construction staging would be within the existing campus. The proposed project would not result

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in any modifications to the existing access or circulation features at the school or on the surrounding streets. No sharp curves or dangerous intersections would be created due to project implementation. Therefore, there would be no impacts involving increased hazards due to a geometric design feature or incompatible uses.

Level of Significance Before Mitigation: No impact.

Impact 5.4-4: The proposed project would not result in inadequate emergency access. [Threshold T-4]

The proposed project would accommodate existing sports programs at the existing high school and would not increase attendance by participants or spectators from existing conditions or affect current capacity of the ballfields. The proposed project would allow practices and games to start later and end later, and no modification to the layout or configuration of the existing ballfield would occur. The emergency and maintenance-use-only access between the varsity baseball and softball fields is an approved project currently under construction and would be completed regardless of the proposed project. This access would not be impacted by the proposed project and would provide adequate emergency access. The path of travel from the existing ballfields demonstrates adequate access and is shown in Appendix E, *Path of Travel Plan*. Additionally, it is anticipated that the sports lighting would not be turned off immediately after practices or games so that cleanup and exit could occur safely.

Level of Significance Before Mitigation: Less than significant impact.

5.4.5 Cumulative Impacts

The proposed project would not substantially change any of the off-site circulation pattern or volumes in the surrounding areas; therefore, it would not conflict with adopted policies, plans, and programs regarding circulation, including public transit, bicycle, and pedestrian facilities. Also, the proposed project is a local-serving public facilities project that would result in a less-than-significant VMT impact. Therefore, when combined with other development projects in the city and the county, the proposed project would not result in a conflict with applicable policies and plans and would not result in increased VMT for residents of San Diego city and county. Cumulative transportation impacts would be less than significant.

5.4.6 Level of Significance Before Mitigation

The following impacts would be less than significant: 5.4-1, 5.4-2, 5.4-3, and 5.4-4.

5.4.7 Mitigation Measures

No mitigation measures from the Certified EIR are applicable and no new mitigation measures are required.

5.4.8 Level of Significance After Mitigation

Not applicable.

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5.4.9 References

- San Diego, City of. 2020, September 29. The City of San Diego Transportation Study Manual (TSM).
<https://www.sandiego.gov/sites/default/files/10-transportation-study-manual.pdf>.
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