

California Department of Transportation

DISTRICT 6 OFFICE
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September 5, 2023

FRE-168-R7.805
DEIR -Draft EIR
DEIR for the Shepherd North project
SCH# 2022050180

<https://ld-igr-gts.dot.ca.gov/district/6/report/26417>

SENT VIA EMAIL

George Gonzalez, Senior Planner
Planning and Development Services Department
City of Clovis
1033 Fifth Street
Clovis, CA 93612



Dear Mx. Gonzalez:

Thank you for the opportunity to review the Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR) for the Shepherd North Project, which proposes to develop approximately 155 acres of land for the construction of 605 single-family residential units and parkland that is currently outside the City of Clovis' city limits. The project is approximately 2 miles north of the State Route (SR) 168 and Fowler Avenue interchange and 2.3 miles northeast of the SR 168 and Herndon Avenue interchange.

The project was previously reviewed as part of the Notice of Preparation (NOP) of a DEIR, a Scope of Work (SOW) for a Transportation Impact Analysis (TIA), and as Tentative Tract Map 6205 (including associated entitlements) with our office providing comment letters dated June 10, 2022, June 22, 2022, and August 15, 2023 respectively. All previous comment letters still apply to this project.

Caltrans provides the following comments consistent with the State's smart mobility goals that support a vibrant economy and sustainable communities:

1. It is projected that the project will significantly impact the SR 168 and Herndon Avenue interchange eastbound (EB) ramps. The eastbound off-ramps will be impacted by the proposed project due to the substantial amount of queue storage it currently projects during the near-term PM peak hour traffic. The utilization of the left-turn lanes on Herndon Avenue heading north onto Clovis Avenue will lead to congestion on the SR 168 and Herndon Avenue off-ramps. **It is recommended that the median island on Herndon Avenue be modified to allow for increasing the storage capacity on Herndon Avenue's left turn lane onto Clovis Avenue which will help alleviate queuing on the SR 168 EB off-ramp.**

2. It is expected that operational issues may arise with the SR 168 and Fowler Avenue westbound (WB) ramps. Based on the queuing analysis conducted for the morning peak hours in 2028, there seems to be no specific lane allotted for making right turns. However, the TIA projects that vehicles will turn right onto SR 168 and head west. This could potentially cause a backlog in the southbound (SB) through-lane on Fowler Avenue for right-turn users. **It is recommended that the City consider proposing a designated right-turn lane in the future to alleviate the anticipated issue.**
3. **The project proponent should be responsible for optimizing signal timing, along with construction of all improvements that are identified within the State right-of-way (ROW), including but not limited to roadway pavement improvements, curb, gutter, sidewalks, driveways, and drainage facilities.**
4. The DEIR notes that the project would have Significant and Unavoidable Impact regarding the vehicle miles traveled (VMT). The project intends to implement design features to help reduce project VMT which include pedestrian infrastructure, improve street connectivity, bicycle infrastructure/improvements, and provide electric vehicle (EV) parking and EV charging infrastructure. We highly encourage the project proponents incorporate the VMT mitigation strategies that were identified and to work closely with local Transit Agencies and the City in finding opportunities to improve multimodal transportation and help mitigate the VMT impacts.
5. As mentioned in the previous comment letter on prior phases of the project and given the VMT impact identified in the DEIR, we recommend the City consider creating a VMT Mitigation Impact Fee to help reduce potential impacts of projects on the local roads and the State Highway System. **It is also recommended that the City consider incorporating the identified road improvements into the City's existing impact fee programs.**
6. An encroachment permit must be obtained for all proposed activities for placement of encroachments within, under or over the State highway rights-of-way. Activity and work planned in the State right-of-way shall be performed to State standards and specifications, at no cost to the State. Engineering plans, calculations, specifications, and reports (documents) shall be stamped and signed by a licensed Engineer or Architect. Engineering documents for encroachment permit activity and work in the State right-of-way may be submitted using English Units. The Permit Department and the Environmental Planning Branch will review and approve the activity and work in the State right-of-way before an encroachment permit is issued. The Streets and Highways Code Section 670 provides Caltrans discretionary approval authority for projects that encroach on the State Highway System. Encroachment permits will be issued in accordance with Streets and Highway Codes, Section 671.5, "Time Limitations." Encroachment permits do not run with the land. A change of ownership requires a new permit application. Only the legal property owner or his/her authorized agent can pursue obtaining an encroachment permit.

George Gonzalez, DEIR for the Shepherd North project
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7. Prior to an encroachment permit application submittal, the project proponent is required to schedule a "Pre-Submittal" meeting with District 6 Encroachment Permit Office. To schedule this meeting, please call the Caltrans Encroachment Permit Office - District 6: 1352 W. Olive, Fresno, CA 93778, at **(559) 488-4058**

Please review the permit application - required document checklist at:

<https://forms.dot.ca.gov/v2Forms/servlet/FormRenderer?frmId=TR0402&distpath=MAOT&brapath=PERM>

Please also review the permit application - processing checklist at:

<https://dot.ca.gov/-/media/dot-media/programs/traffic-operations/documents/encroachment-permits/tr-0416-a11y.pdf>

If you have any other questions, please call or email Christopher Xiong at (559) 908-7064 or Christopher.Xiong@dot.ca.gov.

Sincerely,



DAVID PADILLA, Branch Chief
Transportation Planning – North