

**DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION**

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a California Way of Life.*

June 20, 2024

Mr. Christopher Macon  
City Manager  
City of Laguna Woods  
24264 El Toro Road  
Laguna Woods, CA 92637

File: LDR/CEQA  
SCH#: 2022080022  
12-ORA-2022-02590

Dear Mr. Macon,

Thank you for including the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) in the review of the Draft Program Environmental Impact Report for the Laguna Woods General Plan and Zoning Code Update in the City of Laguna Woods (City). The mission of Caltrans is to provide a safe and reliable transportation network that serves all people and respects the environment.

The plan proposes the creation of four new overlay zoning districts that allow housing development, rezoning of 17 properties, update to the General Plan Land Use, Mobility, and Noise Elements among additional discretionary actions. Regional access to the project area is provided by State Route 261 (SR 261), State Route 241 (SR 241), State Route 133 (SR 133), State Route 73 (SR 73), and Interstate 5 (I-5). Caltrans is a commenting agency for this project and upon review, we have the following comments:

1. Our previous comments in the Caltrans letter dated August 30, 2022 for the Notice of Preparation still apply.
2. In Section 4.5.6 Project Impacts (Page 4.5-9), the section emphasizes the city's commitment to having an equitable transportation system that meets the needs of all users. Please ensure that would include pedestrian improvements that are inclusive for all types of pedestrians with differing needs, such as those who walk more slowly, need more crossing time, have visual impairments, wheelchairs, strollers, etc.
3. Caltrans supports the Circulation Element's Objective 1 to "improve and expand transportation options within the City and to destinations outside the city." The Department strives to make rail and transit modes of transportation a viable option for all. Caltrans supports transportation projects that bring all modes of transportation together to increase connectivity, expand the use of public transportation, and advance equity and livability in all communities.

Providing improved multimodal connections to housing will improve public health and can encourage Irvine residents, future visitors, and workers to utilize

*"Provide a safe and reliable transportation network that serves all people and respects the environment"*

alternative transportation options, thus minimizing single occupant vehicle trips, reducing Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions, congestion, and Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT).

4. Increased density can increase traffic impacts. Consider opportunities to encourage multimodal transportation and mode shifts through the planning and implementation of high-quality Complete Streets that are safe and accessible for people of all ages and abilities.

Caltrans supports the design of Complete Streets that include high-quality pedestrian, bicycle, and transit facilities that are safe and comfortable for users of all ages and abilities. Improvements may include providing secure bicycle parking, pedestrian-oriented LED lighting, wayfinding signage, transit stop amenities, and comfortable connections to nearby active transportation and/or transit facilities. Complete Streets improvements also promote regional connectivity, improve air quality, reduce congestion, promote improved first-/last-mile connections to transit, and increase safety for all modes of transportation. Continue to incorporate Complete Streets in future projects.

5. As part of the State's goals to increase active transportation, Caltrans recommends the inclusion of secure and functional short- and long-term bicycle parking.
6. For future developments, please submit a VMT-based Traffic Impact Study. Please follow the Governor's Office of Planning and Research Guidance to identify VMT related impacts that includes any potential mitigation measures necessary.

With the enactment of Senate Bill 743 (SB 743), Caltrans is focused on maximizing efficient development patterns, innovative travel demand reduction strategies, and multimodal improvements. For more information on how Caltrans assess VMT analysis for land use projects, please review Caltrans' Transportation Impact Study Guide to ensure a complete VMT-based Traffic Impact Study (TIS) is prepared.

<https://dot.ca.gov/-/media/dot-media/programs/transportation-planning/documents/sb-743/2020-05-20-approved-vmt-focused-tisg-a11y.pdf>

7. The TIS may also need to identify the future project's near-term and long-term safety or operational issues, on or adjacent to any existing or proposed State facilities.
8. Please ensure that the General Plan Update analyzes the challenges in goods movement that are unique to the City. The Plan should also address how the City works to achieve an inter-regional network for longer distance travel and freight movement. Connecting towns, cities, and regions to each other, business centers to major intermodal freight transfer points, and commuters to Laguna

Woods and Orange County in general in a sustainable and efficient manner, should be an important objective.

9. Please consider leveraging strategic investments to maintain and modernize a multimodal freight transportation system with innovative approaches, including advanced technology to optimize integrated network efficiency, improve travel time reliability, and achieve sustainable congestion reduction.
10. Safety is one of Caltrans' strategic goals. We are striving for more equitable outcomes for the transportation network's diverse users. To achieve these ambitious goals, we will pursue meaningful collaboration with our partners.

We encourage the implementation of new technologies, innovations, and best practices that will enhance the safety on the transportation network. These pursuits are both ambitious and urgent, and their accomplishment involves a focused departure from the status quo as we continue to institutionalize safety in all our work.

11. Caltrans acknowledges that one of the most serious threats and disruption to the wellbeing of the SCAG region is Climate Change. Full coordination from all levels and agents of decision making is required to ensure the protection and safety of the region's people, built-, and natural environment. Please coordinate with Caltrans and local partners on strategies which support a sustainable transportation network.

Please continue to keep us informed of this project and any future developments that could potentially impact State transportation facilities. If you have any questions or need to contact us, please do not hesitate to contact Joseph Jamoralin at (805) 732-8047 or [Joseph.Jamoralin@dot.ca.gov](mailto:Joseph.Jamoralin@dot.ca.gov)

Sincerely,



SCOTT SHELLEY  
Branch Chief, Local Development Review-Climate Change-Transit Planning  
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