

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

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May 27, 2024

Elizabeth Richardson, Senior Planner
City of Simi Valley Planning Division
2929 Tapo Canyon Road
Simi Valley, CA 93063-2199

RE: North Canyon Ranch (NCR) and
Required Island Annexations (RIA)
Project – Draft Environmental Impact
Report (DEIR)
SCH# 2022080297
GTS #07-VEN-2022-00589
Vic. VEN 118 PM Multiple

Dear Elizabeth Richardson,

Thank you for including the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) in the review process for the above referenced project. The Project includes the North Canyon Ranch (NCR) development and a group of Required Island Annexations (RIA).

- 1) North Canyon Ranch: The project consists of a General Plan Amendment (GPA-0073) to reconfigure the existing General Plan Land Use designations of Medium Density Residential, Moderate Density Residential, and Open Space; a Zone Change (Z-S-0613) to establish zones upon annexation of the site to Residential Medium Density (RM), Residential Moderate Density (RMod), and Open Space (OS); a Tentative Map and Planned Development Permit (TT 5658-A and PD-S-1054) to subdivide and develop the approximately 160.32-acre site with 157 single-family residences, 50 multi-family units, and open space; and an Annexation (ANX-0077) to annex the project site into the City of Simi Valley. The project would also complete the planned extension of Falcon Street through the project site to connect to the current northerly terminus of First Street. The applicant for the project is SVJV Partners, LLC. Development, 3649 Ninth Street, Riverside, CA 92501.
- 2) Required Island Annexations: Island Annexation areas 1-9 encompass 326.06 acres of land and include 444 parcels, comprised of 425 developed single-family

parcels, 5 undeveloped single-family parcels, and 14 other parcels (e.g., open space lots, easements, and/or portions of residentially zoned lots). Only annexation & City zoning comparable to existing County zoning is proposed for these areas. No other changes are proposed at this time in the County Islands, and no foreseeable projects are proposed. The Ventura County Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCo) has required these annexations to occur with the next City annexation, in this case, the North Canyon Ranch Project annexation.

After reviewing the DEIR, Caltrans has the following comments:

North Canyon Ranch:

Currently the project is designed in a way that induces a high number of vehicle trips per household due to being an exclusively residential, car-oriented development. The proposed project extends the exurban area and sprawls into the Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) as designated by the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection's Fire and Resource Assessment Program (FRAP), increasing wildfire risks in addition to potentially significant Vehicle Miles Travelled (VMT) impacts. The Lead Agency is encouraged to integrate transportation and land uses in a way that reduces VMT and Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions by facilitating the provision of more proximate goods and services to shorten trip lengths and achieve a high level of non-motorized travel and transit use. Caltrans recommends the following to more effectively address the significant VMT that this project may create as currently proposed:

- a) Provide for a mixture of land use types within the Project's new zoning area to allow for adaptive reuse. This can allow goods, services, and jobs to be created closer to where the project's residents live.
- b) Reduce the amount of car parking whenever possible. Research looking at the relationship between land-use, parking, and transportation indicates that car parking inflates housing costs and undermines the effectiveness of public transit and active modes of transportation.
- c) Improve connections to existing active transportation and transit infrastructure. This can be done with robust signage, wayfinding, safety improvements, and human scale amenities. Additionally, the most effective methods to reduce pedestrian and bicyclist exposure to vehicles is through physical design and geometrics. These methods include the construction of physically separated facilities such as Class IV bike lanes, wide sidewalks, pedestrian refuge islands, landscaping, street furniture, and reductions in crossing distances through

roadway narrowing. An example of this would be upgrading the bike lanes proposed along Falcon Street from Class 2 to Class 4.

- d) Provide walkable connections to destinations. The project still does not provide a direct, convenient, walkable connection from the project site to the Simi Valley Town Center commercial area. Such a connection would greatly enhance the ability for people to walk and bike to meet some of their needs for goods and services. As proposed the trip requires a lengthy trip along Falcon and First street, which unnecessarily encourages driving.
- e) Adopting a 15% VMT reduction threshold. As stated in Transportation Section 4.14-8 of the DEIR, the City's VMT threshold is based on a 5% reduction from the background VMT. The Governor's Office of Planning and Research's Guidelines recommend a 15% VMT reduction impact threshold relative to baseline, and Caltrans concurs with these recommendations. Adopting the recommended impact thresholds can help California meet its statewide goals and objectives.

Island Annexations:

Any changes or work occurring on or adjacent to Caltrans Right-of-Way will require coordination with the Office of Permits and the Office of Right-of-Way Engineering.

- a) APN 6570-010-110 directly adjoins Route 118. Please reference RW map F2128-1 when applying for any necessary encroachment permits.

Finally, for any roadway improvements such as traffic signals and curb ramps upgrade on or adjacent to Caltrans ROW, a cooperative agreement shall be created between Caltrans and the Lead Agency. The Project would be responsible for payment of applicable fees as required related to the transportation system, and Caltrans is not responsible for any fair-share contribution to the improvement unless specified by an agreement.

Caltrans also highly recommends a post-development VMT analysis (after one year of project operation) for monitoring/validation purposes and for future project thresholds in the area. Should the post-development VMT analysis discover any significant transportation impacts or safety issues, corrective infrastructure mitigation measures should be implemented. Investments in active transportation or transit system infrastructure can reduce the project's VMT impacts and improve safety for all travelers.

Elizabeth Richardson

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Any transportation of heavy construction equipment and/or materials which requires use of oversized-transport vehicles on State highways will need a Caltrans transportation permit. We recommend large size truck trips be limited to off-peak commute periods.

If you have any questions, please contact project coordinator Anthony Higgins, at anthony.higgins@dot.ca.gov and refer to GTS #07-VEN-2022-00589.

Sincerely,

Anthony Higgins for

Miya Edmonson
LDR/CEQA Branch Chief

Cc: State Clearinghouse